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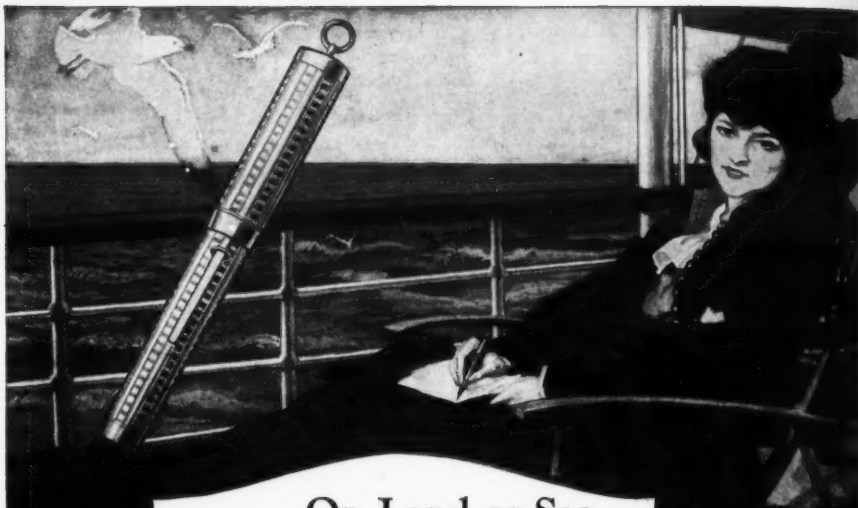
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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

No. 3

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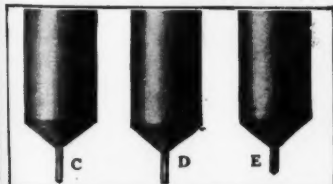
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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

Volume 29

JUNE, 1919

Number 3

Bluff

By Rita Weiman and Josephine Quirk

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

The thrilling, dramatic story of a nice girl who, in desperate circumstances, tries a rather high-handed game of "bluff," and gets into an almost inextricable net.

THE young woman in the glove-fit black satin paused nonchalantly before a mirror to fluff her over-blond hair. Then she glided into the outer office and gazed over the head of the girl waiting there.

"Mr. Conroy can't see you to-day."

"But you said yesterday——"

"He can't see you."

"Won't you ask him—please?"

"He's busy—can't be disturbed."

"But I only want a moment. I just want to show him——"

The black-satin young lady granted the other a rather amused look of appraisal.

"Sorry," she murmured, turned on her heel, and glided back to the door. It closed conclusively.

The girl sat staring numbly after her. And, staring, she caught her own reflection in a glass on the opposite wall. She saw a tired white face topped by a sagging hat, a blue serge suit of last year's cut clinging damply, rubbers that made her feet look twice their size, and a dismal-looking hand bag rubbed gray at the corners. No wonder the black-satin one had seen fit to be amused. She rose, gathered together her belongings, and made her way out of the sumptuous office of Dickson &

Company, Modistes. The door of the elevator slid silently open, then closed. With a sinking, sick sensation, she dropped downward.

The room was quite dark—gray dark. From one corner the glow of the stove was like a big red eye. The man on the couch watched it steadily. It had a sinister, a mocking look. He turned his head to get away from it. That was the only part of his body he could turn without a stab of pain.

The door to the hall opened softly and a girl stood in the path the gaslight trailed across the floor.

"All alone in the dark, boy dear?"

The man on the couch turned eagerly.

"At last!"

She bent over him and he rested his head against her breast, groping in the darkness until he touched her shoulders.

"You're soaking! Get out of those things and give us a light. I want to see you."

She laughed.

"Not much to look at, brother mine. It's been a vile day."

She felt her way around the wall, found the long gas lighter, and lit the two jets that flickered through the old glass globes. She ripped off hat and

coat, hung them on a chair by the stove, and stood back to survey herself, and into her eyes came the same expression they had held as she had caught sight of herself in the mirror panel of Dickson & Company's outer office. It was an odd look, part frown, part smile, but the greatest part defiance; and they were odd eyes—long, tawny, with a way of narrowing that gave to an otherwise wistful face a look of daring. The brows were very straight, fine and dark, and topped by a mass of red hair like a lion's mane. Her skin had the smooth, blank pallor of a Henner picture. Her body was slender, long, broad-shouldered like a boy's. It fitted the name "Billy," which had been bestowed upon her by a father with a sense of humor.

Standing now under the pale light, she looked very feminine; very young, too—less than her twenty-four years—except for that expression in her eyes.

Her slow scrutiny swept the room. It was a typical drab lodging-house "best room," from the tan wall paper patterned in gilt to the marble-topped table with one leg loose. This was what New York had given them! And only six months ago they had come out of the West, each with ambitions tucked under one arm, hers in a portfolio of drawings, his in a university diploma.

Jack Hallowell watched anxiously until her gaze came back to the couch.

"Any news?"

She looked away again.

"Of course. Knew there wouldn't be."

"Everybody was busy to-day. But to-morrow——"

"It's been to-morrow for three months. If I could only get out and hustle!"

"Cheer up, sonny! Something good has happened, even though it's November. I've been offered a real job by the manager of a department store. At the men's glove counter. They like good-lookers at the gloves, he said."

"Dog!"

"You ingrate! It means eight per."

"You offer them the genius of an artist, and they offer you a job selling gloves!"

"What's the difference? There isn't a dressmaker in town who'll look at my designs. I don't blame them, either. Can't expect to find Fifth Avenue styles in the head of a girl who looks like Fourteenth Street."

"What right have you to judge your talents by what you have on your back?"

"That's New York's way."

"New York!" The word came through set teeth. "I want to get out of this hell hole! Only thing it's brought us is rotten luck. It's cold and hard as nails!"

"It's just busy—hasn't time for sentiment."

"Hasn't time for anything."

"We'll get that way, too, some day—when success knocks at the door."

"Sweet chance of success we have!"

"The chance of every other fellow who starts out with a handicap."

"We've more than one."

"All the more reason to fight."

He grabbed her hand tensely.

"Gosh, you're a brick, girl!"

"No—but experience in this town has taught me a cute little philosophy of life: 'Learn to see the joke on yourself as well as on the other chap.'"

Jack's voice came low, with a tremor in it.

"I wouldn't mind what's happened to me—if it weren't so tough on you."

"Piffle!" She made an effort to keep her tone light. "It's giving me a chance to show how capable women are. I haven't red hair and Irish forefathers for nothing."

"Listen, old pal—do me a favor, will you?" Jack pressed her hand to his lips. He had felt the sob that caught in her throat.

"Sure, sonny."

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Unconsciously she assumed the same pose, head tipped back, eyes narrowed. "She's rather my type, isn't she?"

"Promise?"

"Anything—within reason."

"Then—give yourself a rest. Quit tramping the streets the way you've been doing these past three months. I can't stand it."

She turned away so that he might not see her eyes.

"Why, we haven't more than a few hundred in the bank," she said gently, "and we've *got* to hold on to that."

"There's my life insurance," he pleaded eagerly. "I've paid the premiums up to date. It's in your name—take it. Raise money on it."

"Time for that when we're starving, dear," she answered. "And even if the worst gets worse, we can take a smaller room and cut it in two with a screen. Madame Berger will always trust us for rent."

The light went out of Jack's eyes.

"This is what I've brought you to! Lying here for hours—thinking—what I was and what I am! To cross the street hale and hearty, and the next minute to be under the wheels of a car, a cripple——"

She broke in hastily:

"Never mind, boy. We won't give

Kitchell any peace until he gives us satisfaction."

He looked up at her with a grim smile.

"You're not fooling yourself. You don't think he'll ever admit he was out with a bunch of joy-riders, so staggering drunk he couldn't drive his own car."

"But, Jackie—you'll see. He'll never let us go to court. He'd be afraid of his position."

"Position! That's his protection. It's because he's police commissioner that he can laugh at anything I threaten." His hands clenched desperately. "When I think of it, I go crazy!"

"Come—come." She smoothed his pillows, his hair, ran her cool fingers across his brow. "We'll win out yet. I'm going to take that job at eight per. I'm going to scrimp and save—and starve you—until I can get some decent clothes. Then I'll hit 'em all in the eye, by Jove!"

Jack raised himself sharply on one elbow.

"I won't have it! I won't have you selling gloves over a counter!"

She pushed him back into the nest of pillows and got to her feet, laughing lightly.

"Think of all the nice men whose hands I can hold!"

"I won't have it, I tell you!"

"Why, who knows?" she went on dreamily, while she filled the alcohol lamp on the lame-legged table. "Some man with a million and a cough may come along, and the thrill of my touch may"—she struck a match with a large outward gesture—"strike a spark in his heart."

"Afraid my sense of humor's not up to par to-day, old chap," came desperately. "I know I'm a brute, giving way to grouches like this. But when I'm alone, it sweeps over me. I may never be able to walk again, and that dog of-

fers five hundred dollars in settlement! Five hundred! God, if it weren't so hideous, it'd be funny!"

The girl turned on him furiously. Her eyes glared. Her body was tense. She looked like some wild thing uncontrolled.

"Jack—fight him! Get your back up—snarl, scratch, bite! But don't drop your tail and give in!"

A suggestion of the old twinkle flashed into his eyes.

"How can a fellow get his back up when he's flat down on it?"

"Use your paws," she flashed back, "and land him a 'paster in the hash box!'"

They laughed together then, and she tossed him the evening papers and made her exit quickly behind the turkey-red curtains that cut off her little alcove bedroom.

"Read me the news while the tea draws and I get into me satin negligee," she said. "Any developments in the Loring case?"

He opened one of the papers, revealing a front page spread with big headlines and several cuts and a striking young woman. They were labeled: "The Fascinating Nina Loring." For the past two weeks, the mystery of Nina Loring had distracted interest from the war. An American girl who had lived abroad since childhood, one of the most prominent figures in London's smart set, had disappeared after the death of her fiancé, Captain Cyril Lloyd, at the front. She had been stopping at the home of the Countess of Gresham, and suddenly, without warning, had dropped off the face of the earth. The English authorities feared that she might have taken her life while temporarily deranged, and the "yellows" wallowed in speculations as to what had become of her. Her red hair, milky skin, and eccentricities in dress, had made her a conspicuous figure socially for several years before

the war. Her famous peacock costume, worn with jeweled sandals and no stockings at a ball at Buckingham Palace, had been the talk of London, and had given her the nickname of "Naughty Nina." But since the war, she had retired from society and devoted herself to Red Cross work.

"No trace yet of the Loring girl," Jack called. "They're dragging the Thames—afraid she's committed suicide."

A deep sigh came from the red curtains.

"Some people have all the luck!"

"What do you mean?"

"I'd give my eyes for the publicity she's getting. She doesn't need it. She gets it. I don't."

"You bet she does! Two columns and four pictures in every edition of the yellows."

Billy came in, buttoning a long bungalow apron. She glanced at the print of Nina Loring, slim and serpentine, with eyes half closed, peacock feathers topping her head and trailing in a long tail from her bare, sandaled feet. Unconsciously she assumed the same pose, head tipped back, eyes narrowed.

"She's rather my type, isn't she?"

Jack's gaze traveled the length of her—red hair, narrow, daring eyes, graceful slimness.

"You're a darn' sight better looking."

"Of course," Billy laughed. "But I'll tell you this—to look just like her and get that much advertisement out of it"—she paused to emphasize the words—"I'd sell my soul to Satan!"

"Bill!"

"I would! Just one thing counts nowadays—get into the public eye and stick there like a mote. That girl's clothes have made her famous. I've just as much talent as she has—talent of the same sort. Yet they turn me down wherever I go because they don't know who I am and don't give a hang. Now if Nina Loring walked into a shop

with a portfolio of designs under her arm, can't you see they'd fall over themselves to get hold of her?"

"But, kid, her name would be an asset."

Billy thumped a fist on the table.

"Well, she made it so. She's fooled the public by being different. And, by heck, some day I'll do something crazy and make mine an asset, too."

"What, for instance?" Jack was evidently enjoying her.

"Bluff 'em, bamboozle 'em—be anything but myself. It's the vampire who wins out in the long run."

"Whew! And what, may I ask, is your definition of a vampire?"

"A woman who gets the most and gives the least."

"Not colorful enough. I'd call her a sugar-coated stick of dynamite."

"Dynamite?" She considered the word thoughtfully. "Then why do men pursue her?"

"Because of the sugar coating—not the explosive."

She studied the pictured Nina with an intensity that might have burned a hole in the paper.

"No sugar coating there. Doesn't have to be." She swept a hand across the page. "That woman's a regular mine."

"Bill—that's sacrilege! The girl's probably dead."

"Dead?" She flung back her head and laughed, a long, weird laugh. "No woman who can look like that kills herself while there are men alive."

Once more she bent her gaze on the picture, the same queer expression in her eyes.

CHAPTER II.

Dr. Stephen Curtiss paused in the hall to hand his umbrella and rubbers to Fifine. Fifine was Madame Berger's young niece, who, when she remembered to work, was housemaid and general assistant.

Curtiss felt of his pockets, smiled, mounted the stairs, and stopped at the door of the front room. His hair, sifted with gray, and the tired lines around his eyes, denoted approaching middle age. His careless dress, his rusty coat were those of the medical man who had dropped a bit behind the times.

after the suit for fifty thousand dollars had been brought. Curtiss opened the door and entered.

On the center table stood two cups and a kettle of cold tea. Jack was leaning forward, every muscle strained to combat his helplessness. Billy's tawny eyes were calmly measuring the young man who stood facing them with the utmost confidence, a roll of greenbacks in his hand. Her expression was one of bored tolerance, but behind her back her hands were clenched.

"Have you considered how long a lawsuit can drag?" Mr. Blakeley was saying pleasantly. "Years. And after the decision, appeals. And finally, my



Jack bounded up from his pillow.
"You damn' liar! Kitchell's the
one who was drunk!"

He knocked gently. There was no answer. Voices came to him from the other side of the wall—Jack's husky with fury, and another, smooth, sleek, assured, and very quiet. Curtiss recognized it at once. It belonged to Waldo Blakeley, confidential secretary of Commissioner Kitchell. The doctor had met Mr. Blakeley on two occasions—once at the hospital, when he had called on Jack in an attempt to settle the claim for damages then and there, and again

dear young man, you'll be glad to take anything to get it done with."

Billy looked him over with precisely the same smile the over-blond lady had given her earlier in the afternoon.

"Really, you know," she observed, "the man who pays you to come here and frighten us has no sense of humor. If he had, he'd realize he hasn't a leg to stand on."

"He can get as many legs as he requires," came nonchalantly. "In fact,

one can prove in court—almost anything."

Jack gave an ironic laugh and glanced the length of his body.

"The evidence of my injury is here."

"And don't overlook the fact, Mr. Blakeley," Curtiss broke in, "that he has a hospital staff to back him up."

"If this case is permitted to go to court, no fact will be overlooked by the defense. For instance—we have witnesses who are ready to swear that Mr. Hallowell was so dead drunk at the time of the accident that he'd been nearly run down by several other cars."

Jack bounded up from his pillows.

"You damn' liar! Kitchell's the one who was *drunk*!"

Blakeley gave an eloquent shrug.

"I'm merely citing an example of what has been done. Pedestrians in New York are inexcusably careless. In France a man is arrested for being run down. The same thing should be done here. Besides which, we have no proof that this isn't a put-up job to bleed a prominent man." He picked up his hat from the table. "The commissioner, instead of making trouble for you, makes you the generous offer of a thousand dollars. That's five hundred over what you should get. Will you take it?"

"No. The one capital I had was my health. He's robbed me of it. Now he's got to pay—and pay big. That's my answer."

"My dear fellow"—Blakeley went toward the door, pocketing the greenbacks—"there are certain conditions we cannot change. Best accept them gracefully. Why antagonize a man of Kitchell's power?"

He bowed, a pleasant, friendly bow that included them all, and was gone.

Silence settled like a pall over the room. Then the doctor's voice came out of the chill of it:

"Bully for you, my boy!"

"Just bluffing," was the dull answer.

"Well, you must have thrown a scare into them, or he wouldn't be wasting so much effort to settle."

Jack turned slowly to his sister.

"Kid, will you give us a few minutes alone? I want to talk to the doc."

The girl's hand was at her throat, trying to check a convulsive sob. She went to the couch.

"Please don't let it affect you so."

When the door had closed after her, there was silence a moment, while the doctor extracted from various pockets several bulky packages. He set them carefully on the table, pulled off the wrappings, and arranged them in two rows, jams to the fore, mixed pickles and peanut butter to the rear.

Then he returned to the couch. Jack thrust his head forward, drawing the other man's gaze like a magnet.

"Doc, if I ask you a straight question, will you give me a direct answer?"

"Of course."

"No frills?"

"Fire ahead!" Curtiss slipped a package of cigarettes into his hand. "But take a pull at one of these first."

Jack settled back and lit a cigarette, and through the smoke, his eyes riveted on those of the doctor.

Half an hour later, Billy came slowly up the stairs, head bent. The doctor had gone, evading when she had asked what Jack had wanted to see him about. She was very blue and depressed. There had been tears in her throat all day. It had been such a dull, cruel day, with its slash of rain along the sloppy gray streets, its disappointments, and the laughter in the eyes of the people who had turned her down.

She trudged on upward to the landing, tiptoed along the hall, and stood listening. It was quiet inside—no sound, no movement. Softly she opened the door and stepped into the room.

It might have been an instant or an

eternity before her mind registered what her eyes saw. She stood on the threshold with the blank stare of a sleepwalker, peering through the darkness at the gleam of a lifted weapon. The red eye of the stove seemed concentrated on it, too. Slowly, steadily it was moving nearer and nearer to the head of the man on the couch.

She never knew, afterward, how she managed to stumble across the miles of floor, how she had the strength to push the revolver upward, wrenching it from her brother's grasp. It was all done in absolute silence—not even a gasp when at last she held the thing in her hand and stood looking down at it fascinated, as at some reptile.

Then all of a sudden she crumpled in a heap beside the couch and began to sob convulsively.

"You should have let me finish the job," came hoarsely. "It's the only way."

"Oh, Jack—Jack, how could you—how could you?"

"I'm no good like this."

"How could you?"

"I had a straight talk with Curtiss. He said it would take a year at least—and another operation—"

"I can't—I don't believe it of you!"

"But don't you see—you'd be better off—have something to live on—if I were out of the way."

"Do you realize— Why, you're all I have, Jackie!"

"I'm no good—never will be. What's the good of fooling ourselves?"

She raised her head then, and a swift change swept over her face.

"Jack—if ever you try that again," the words came slow and quiet, with the emphasis of prophecy—"do you know what I'll do? I'll kill myself! I will, so help me God! I couldn't stand knowing that you'd been a quitter."

"I—I'm sorry, girl. It—it was you I was thinking of."

"How could you dare think that anything—anything in the whole wide world—could make up for you?"

"I'm sorry. Everything's distorted to me these days." He reached out a hand. "Please—forgive me!"

Billy took it, pressed it against her cheek, and stood looking down at him thoughtfully. A shudder shook her from head to foot. Then she caught up a sheet of the newspaper and began tearing it nervously into strips.

"Damn Kitchell!" came under her breath. "If only we could get money enough to make him pay for what he's done!"

Her long eyes, which at times so strongly suggested a tiger's, fastened themselves on the page she was tearing. Nina Loring gazed up at her, mocking. That girl would have found a way out! That girl who had roused the world's interest by her disappearance! That girl, who in so many ways resembled her, what would she have done under similar circumstances? Billy held the sheet closer, studying the pictured face. For ten or fifteen minutes she sat so, immovable as one in a trance. Then suddenly her eyes blazed. She sprang up and thrust the paper abruptly into her brother's hand.

"How much do I look like her?" she asked tensely.

He looked up, attributing the feverish note in her voice to her concern for him.

"I told you," he answered, "you're prettier."

"But do I really look like her—the least bit?"

"Quite some, as newspaper pictures go."

She gave a little gasp, seized his shoulder, and leaned close to him.

"Jack—have I your permission to draw every cent we own out of the bank?"

"It's yours, old girl."

"Every single penny?"

"Every last sou."

"Good! Give me a pencil." She sat down on the floor, figuring rapidly on the border of the paper. "We have almost four hundred and something, haven't we?"

"About four hundred and eighty, I should say."

"That'll be enough, I hope."

"Enough?"

"Sure! I'll need it all!"

"In Heaven's name—what for?"

She caught hold of both his hands. Her voice was throaty, breathless.

"For the most colossal swindle of the age! I'm sick of waiting! I'm going the limit. Don't ask me how. But I promise you this: Before another month is out, I'll have 'em here!" She jumped up, stretching out her palms excitedly. "Jackie, I'm going to make all New York sit up and take notice! I'm going to be a vampire!"

CHAPTER III.

A certain suite high up in the Plaza Hotel overlooks the Park with cool aloofness. Fifty-ninth Street might be the moat of a castle from its point of view, or, worse still, absolutely nonexistent. Its windows stare down at the treetops as if the Park belonged to them. The roar of traffic comes softened by distance. All is peace and luxurious quiet.

The furnishings are in keeping. A black velvet rug covers the floor of the salon, and an occasional black velvet cushion graces the turquoise-brocaded chairs and davenport. The paneled walls are of blue brocade, from which little clusters of light send out a soft, warm sunset glow, very flattering. The wide davenport is drawn up before the logs in the marble fireplace in a position that invites confidences. The dainty tea table is of black lacquer, as is the desk, with its blue enamel desk set. A glimpse of the bedroom reveals a pale-blue satin-covered bed on a dais, with

just one cherry-colored pillow peeping up at the head. It is an apartment particularly favored by wealthy matrons past middle age.

But on the day in question, a snow-covered one of December, the girl who stood at one of the windows fitted the surroundings as completely as if they had been designed for her. A touch of the bizarre, a touch of the exotic, yet, with it all, a warm, magnetic sweetness—that was the room, that was the girl.

She wore a short dress of silky black velvet that hung straight from her shoulders in slim, clinging lines. The bottom was weighted with fur. The sleeves were long and tight, so long that only her white fingers extended from them. And from the slightly low-cut neck rose her throat, smooth and curved. Not a trace of color was in her cheeks, but her lips were crimson, naturally so. And the hair, piled high, lay in heavy red waves against her forehead. No jewels, no sign of ornament of any kind—just black and white, topped by one splash of color that was nature's. The picture was daring in its simplicity.

She stood for a time gazing down at the stretch of Park—winding white paths, ice-crusted trees, spreading mirror of lake, like a miniature fairyland a-twinkle in the sunlight. Then she heaved a sigh and moved slowly over to the desk. She added up some figures on a sheet of paper, tore it carefully into tiny bits, and sighed again.

The phone in the bedroom tinkled. High heels skidded across the floor and a breathless figure in frilly maid's garb sat down at the telephone table.

A man's voice came across the wire, and Ffine announced that Mr. Conroy, of Dickson & Company, wished to speak to Miss Hallowell.

Billy took up the receiver. With an accent made in Great Britain:

"Yes, Mr. Conroy? No, not to-day.



A terrible, clammy silence descended on her.
It was like the clutch of death.
She sat perfectly rigid.

Sorry—I can't. To-morrow afternoon, at four-thirty. I shall expect you."

The voice at the other end held a tremor of excitement as it thanked her, addressing her effusively by a name that made her break in, breathless:

"Please—please! Don't mention that name! Remember, I am Miss Hallowell."

She rang off and dropped back in the chair, a hand on her thumping heart. With that telephone call had come in a rush a full realization of what she was doing—the enormity of it, the



"Nina!" he cried. "Dear little Nina!"

dire results if she should fail. Up to that minute, she had worked feverishly, recklessly, without stopping to think. But now she stopped, stopped with a vengeance.

It swept over her in a suffocating deluge. She, Billy Hollowell, had undertaken to pass herself off as Nina Loring, late of London. And the man at the phone had just addressed her as "Miss Loring!"

No one knew what she was doing, no one except Fifine, who understood not at all. No one would be there to help if things went wrong.

She had made her preparations, which consisted chiefly of clothes, under Jack's bewildered eyes. And when they were ready, she had, without a word

of explanation, packed her trunk and registered at the Plaza as "Miss B. Hollowell and maid, San Francisco." She had given her address to Madame Berger with a wild idea that if she should have to commit suicide, they ought to know where to send for the body. But she had left her brother with a laugh in her eyes and a shake of the head when he had asked questions.

That had been three days ago.

There had followed mysterious messages sent by hand to the five most exclusive dressmaking establishments in town, stating that a lady from London, whose name was familiar to them all, was in New York incognito, registered at the Plaza as "Miss Hollowell." If

they cared to send representatives to her at four-thirty Thursday, she had an announcement to make which, she thought, might prove of interest to them. Of course she must rely upon their honor to say nothing of this communication. If they chose to accept her invitation for Thursday, the reason for this would be made clear. There had been no signature, but she knew they would instantly link "London" with "Loring."

She went back to the desk and for the fiftieth time added up expenses:

Suite at the Plaza—one week.....	\$150.00
Eats at Child's	3.00
Sending flowers to myself.....	10.00
Hairdressing, manicuring, massage..	8.00
Tips	10.00
Materials for gowns	85.00
Hats, shoes, and other things for self	94.50
Furs	155.00
Shoes and dress for Fifiue	7.80
Apron and cap for Fifiue99
Total	\$524.38

Borrowed from Berger

\$46.88

She gazed on the list for a long moment, heaved another sigh, then sprang to her feet.

"I've got to have air!"

Out on the street, with an icy-fingered wind tapping her cheeks until the blood came dancing to the surface, she felt better. But the sudden panic that had seized her did not disappear. Viewed in prospect, with every detail carefully planned, the thing had seemed simple enough—a daring adventure, if you like, but one that must work out right. She was merely using another woman's name as the golden key to doors that would not open to her in any other way. Afterward, she would work like mad to make good on her own, and she had felt sure that she could succeed.

That had been the outlook from Madame Berger's four-story and basement in Thirty-ninth Street. From Fifty-ninth Street, with the first steps taken,

it looked a bit less simple—quite a bit, in fact. After all, vampires are born, not made; one must approach the game with zest for the chase, not with trepidation. Billy was rapidly discovering that desiring to become an adventuress was one thing, fitting the rôle to one's size another.

She walked miles around the Park that afternoon.

Returning to the hotel, she assumed an expression of bored nonchalance, as she trailed across the lobby into the elevator.

A clerk tapped the arm of a man leaning against the desk.

"There she goes," he said.

CHAPTER IV.

Billy laid aside her furs, clicked on the soft side lights, and sank onto the davenport before the fire.

"Fifiue," she asked speculatively, "shall it be ham sandwiches for dinner—or cheese?"

Fifiue's nose crinkled.

"Ham las' night, cheese night before."

"Well, tongue's too expensive, and I hate sardines."

Fifiue had an inspiration.

"*Saucisse*, mad'moiselle!"

"Sausage! Fifiue, you're insulting! Aristocrats have been known to sink to cheese—but sausage!"

Fifiue gave an eloquent shrug.

"All right. Ham!"

She took off cap and apron and was in the act of pinning on the little toque Billy had made for her when the doorbell rang peremptorily. Fifiue dropped hat and jaw at the same time. Billy sat bolt upright. She was expecting no visitor—no message. The flowers she had ordered were not to be delivered until the following day.

A second ring came, sharp, impatient. Fifiue fumbled with the frilly cap. Billy gulped hard.

"Go ahead. I may as well see it

through. But find out the name before you let any one come in."

A pause, then a man's voice asking for Miss Hallowell. She waited tensely while Fifiine demanded the name.

"Oh, that's all right," came with a laugh. "She'll be glad to see me."

Fifiine protested in excited French, but there came a swift step along the hall, and a man stood in the doorway.

It was a long time before Billy could put into words that first impression. She only knew that he was standing there, big enough to seem powerful, in brown suit and spats, with neither hat nor coat, a man she had never set eyes on. She only knew that he stood gazing at her an instant, and then, before she could get her breath, rushed at her, both hands outstretched.

"Nina!" he cried. "Dear little Nina!"

A terrible, clammy silence descended on her. It was like the clutch of death. She sat perfectly rigid. Nina, he had said. Nina! And with that little word sounded her knell. How—how should she answer him?

He gave her no chance. He seized her hands in a grip that hurt, and wrung them with wild enthusiasm.

"Nina! What a surprise—the surprise of my life!"

Still she sat staring. Her throat seemed closed.

He looked her over.

"I shouldn't have known you."

"Nor I you," she managed to bring out.



"*Mais les sandwiches!*"
Fifiine insisted.

The tone of her voice evidently disappointed him.

"Not a bit glad to see me?"

"Who—who are you, please?"

He took a step backward, looking down at her with a broad smile.

"Why—I'm Fizzie. Don't you remember Fizzie?"

"I—I'm afraid not."

"Don't mean to say you've even forgotten my name! Doesn't 'Fitzmaurice' spell anything to you?"

"Disaster," was the word that flashed

through her mind. "I confess, I can't quite place you," she told him.

"Well, come to think of it, that's not so surprising. Must be something of a shock, having me walk in like this."

"It is—something."

"I ought to apologize. It happened this way. My rooms are down the hall on this floor. Early this afternoon, I was at the phone when our wires must have got crossed, and I heard some one addressed as 'Miss Loring'—"

Billy broke in hastily.

"But—but I assure you, I'm not—"

"Oh, yes," he laughed, "I got the incog, too." He bowed. "Charmed, Miss Hallowell!"

She forced her lips into a faint smile.

"Well," he went on, "I tried to get you on the phone a bit later, but there was no answer. So I lay in wait for you to come in—and here I am."

At the moment, Billy wasn't sane enough to question his explanation. The whole experience was so wild, so ridiculously unexpected, that her mind simply stood still. Crossed-wires have been known to happen; therefore, she accepted them. Old acquaintances have been known to drop from the skies; therefore, she must accept him and play up until she could get rid of him without arousing suspicion.

He stood gazing down at her with the happiest sort of boy's grin, a grin so disarming that it made her feel they must certainly have known each other somewhere, some time, somehow. She tried to gain control of her voice, weighing each word as it came to her lips.

"If I insist that I'm not Nina Loring, you won't believe me, will you?"

"Hardly! Couldn't mistake that hair, though you've changed some since you were a carrot-headed kid."

She gave him an uncertain smile.

"I'm a brute, breaking in on you this way," he apologized. "Don't know why I didn't think of announcing myself or

sending you a note. But we used to be such good pals when you were a tomboy with a temper that matched your hair and I was a tousled shaver, that—well, I didn't think of going through any formalities. Just wanted to have a look at you—after all these years."

She grabbed at the cue, feeling her way carefully.

"A woman's arithmetic in the matter of years is never the same as a man's. Please—don't tell me I'm as old as you!"

"Thirty-eight last month! Let me see—according to statistics, you ought to be twenty-nine. I don't suppose you are, though."

"No, I'm not."

"Still, you must have some recollection of the big, bad boy next door you promised to marry when you 'grewed up.'"

"D-d-did I?"

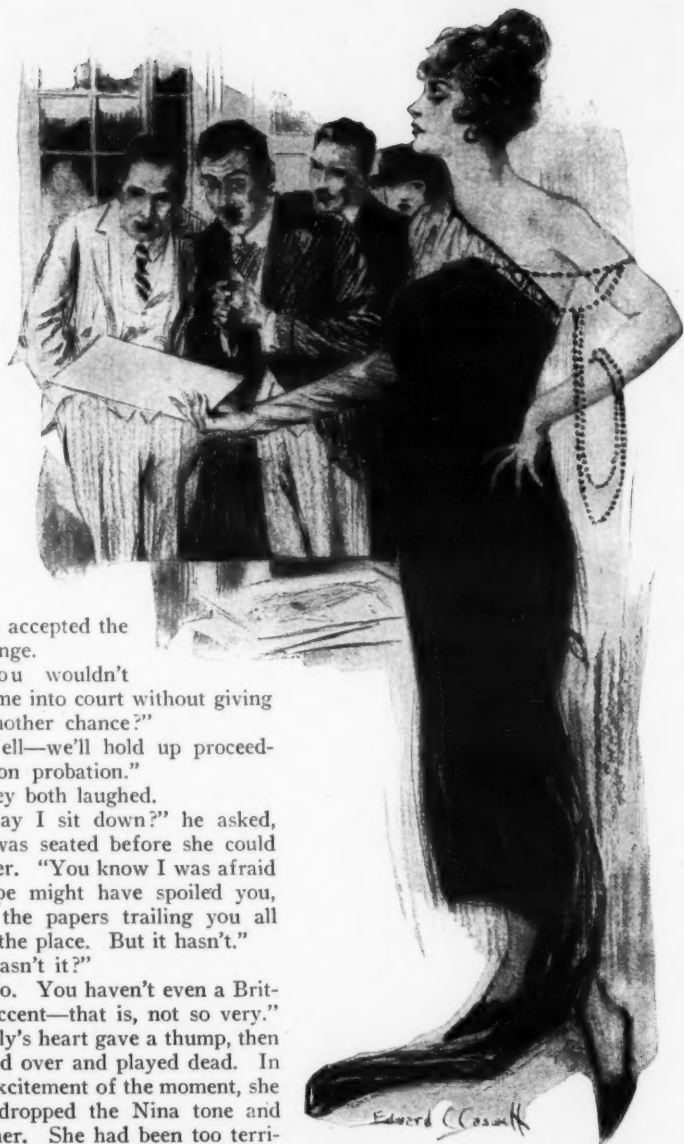
"You most certainly d-d-did! Used to climb through the hedge to kiss me every morning. Remember that?"

"N-no."

"Well, I do."

His eyes were quizzing her, with somewhere deep under the surface a challenge. She noticed that they were gray, one lifted at the corner a bit higher than the other, giving the impression that one would be sure to see what the other allowed to slip by. Likewise, they were nice to look into. His hair was straight and black and brushed flat against his head. He was strongly built, but lean, and his face, except when he smiled, was a bit hard. He had the look of a man who would be equally at home presiding at a formal banquet or on a broncho tearing wildly across the prairie. He was keen; Billy got that at once. She must proceed warily.

"That's why," he went on, "when I discovered you were here, I came post-haste to sue for breach of promise."



She accepted the challenge.

"You wouldn't drag me into court without giving me another chance?"

"Well—we'll hold up proceedings on probation."

They both laughed.

"May I sit down?" he asked, and was seated before she could answer. "You know I was afraid Europe might have spoiled you, with the papers trailing you all over the place. But it hasn't."

"Hasn't it?"

"No. You haven't even a British accent—that is, not so very."

Billy's heart gave a thump, then turned over and played dead. In the excitement of the moment, she had dropped the Nina tone and manner. She had been too terrified to be anything but herself. And now it was too late to go back to it.

There were murmurs of "How heavenly!"
"Superb!" "Stunning!"

"I've never forgotten that I am an American," she said.

"Let me see—how long is it since your aunt died and the place out Westchester way was sold?"

"Oh, years," came vaguely.

"That's right. I was just out of college—on a trip through the Orient—when it happened. And when I got back, the little red bird had flown. Where to?"

"England."

"All alone?"

"With—with relatives—distant ones."

"By George, you wouldn't believe how I missed you! The old house all boarded up made me sick and lonely. I kept recalling our happy days there."

"Weren't there any girls to take my place?"

"No girl in the world could take your place, Nina."

There was an instant's pause, during which he gazed down at her so steadily that she felt the blood surge to her face. If only she could get rid of him without seeming to!

"Do you recall how I used to sit on your doorstep when you were ill? Remember the time you had measles and they wouldn't let me in? Remember—"

"Oh, please," Billy plunged in, with a swift gesture of pushing aside the questions, "let's not recall too many memories! Sometimes I think they're like poor relations—always turning up at the wrong time."

"Why, I'd an idea memories of the old days couldn't be anything but pleasant."

She looked away from him, hands locking and unlocking nervously.

"It isn't that, but——"

"But—what?"

She turned to him swiftly.

"I've come away under an assumed name to forget—lots of things. And now"—her voice caught—"now you've found me. Oh, it isn't that I'm not

glad," she found herself adding, to her own amazement. "Only, I want you to promise something."

"Yes?"

"I—I want you to promise that you won't give away my secret."

Was it her own anxiety, or did he seem to hesitate?

"Will you?" she urged.

He reached out a hand silently. She laid her own on the palm and it closed tightly.

"Your hand on it?"

"My heart in it." For a second the twinkle went out of his eyes. "Suppose I were to ask you, in return for the promise, why you disappeared so mysteriously and what you're doing here?"

"I should probably answer that I'm trying to run away from the world."

"The world doesn't seem anxious to let you."

"No."

"Good old scout!" He bent down, looking at her closely. "Takes a beautiful woman to put two countries on the jump for her!"

"I wish they'd stop jumping."

He flung back his head with a low laugh.

"And the papers thought you dead!"

"Let them go on thinking it, please—until the ghost decides to walk."

"How long, may I ask, do you think of remaining a dead one?"

"I—don't know."

"May I appoint myself first gravedigger?"

"If you'll promise to make the silence of the grave interesting."

"My humble self and all New York are at my lady's disposal."

"Your humble self will do." Before the words passed her lips, she wondered why she said them. A moment before, she'd have given worlds to rid herself of him. Now she was actually inviting him to stay—and come again.

"What made you come here?"

"Change of air."

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"Was it—Lloyd?" he pursued.

"Who?"

"The chap you were engaged to."

"Oh!" She had been caught off guard. She looked down quickly to hide the flush of terror that swept over her. "Cyril, you mean. I—I don't quite know. Perhaps. But he—he was so much more like a big brother than a lover that I—I miss him more that way. You see, we'd known each other so many years that we—we drifted into an engagement before he went away. It wasn't exactly great love with either of us. It was the war, rather."

She wondered vaguely why she was embroidering the story—why, as Nina, she was so anxious to impress on him the fact that she had not been in love with Captain Lloyd. She had suddenly a wild, overwhelming desire to blurt out the truth, to tell him the whole story, her own, from beginning to end. It was all she could do to curb the impulse. The truth! To this man she had never seen before, this utter stranger! How Fate would laugh in her face! A fine adventuress she was!

It flashed over her that if she was to save herself from doing anything reckless, she must keep the conversation on a lighter level, away from personalities, away from any question that might lead up blind alleys.

"You know, little Nina," he persisted, "I've followed your career with an interest that's uncanny. Even as a youngster, I felt sure you'd be famous—some day."

"But I'm not really famous. Social success is just an infinite capacity for being gracefully bored."

"Well, even that's going some. And another thing— Look up, won't you?"

She looked up.

"Yes, I always knew that when your eyes grew up, they'd be long—and promising."

She looked down.

"No, please. I like the view."

She brought her eyes to his, and for some unaccountable reason, her lips trembled.

"And yet," he mused, "you're not a bit as I imagined you."

"No?"

"No airs, no graces—just——" He paused. "By Jove, how is it some Britisher didn't snatch you up five years ago? What's the matter with them, anyway?"

"Oh"—she gave an airy laugh—"they don't stimulate curiosity. One knows their characteristics so well. And if a woman isn't curious when she marries, she's going to be bored!"

"Women are curious, married or single."

"Are they? How much do you know about it?"

"I might ask the same question."

"Oh, I've just watched—and learned. A man's a perfectly good friend. Then he makes love to you, and you know he wants to marry you. Then he stops making love to you, and you know the marriage has happened. You see"—her head went to one side speculatively—"friendship is love—without wings."

"But no wings! Then you've no place to roost when it's cold and stormy."

"But there's no chance of friendship flying away, either."

"Just the same"—he leaned toward her—"some day some one will catch you off guard, chain you hand and foot and——"

"Heavens!" She threw up her hands. "Spare me chains!"

"I'll guarantee nothing."

"Men always say that, don't they? It's so safe."

"Are you really such a skeptic or only pretending?"

She looked up at him tantalizingly.

"Pretending."

"I thought as much. You couldn't

look as sweet as when you were rompers and not be a child at heart."

Billy could not answer. She tried to say something light and laughing, but the words stuck in her throat. His steady gaze, the eyes, so oddly set, that seemed one moment to be mocking, the next covering her with warmth, held her. It was like a spell she couldn't shake off.

"We're going to have some bully times together," he told her.

"But how far can I trust you?"

"To the end of the world—in all kinds of weather."

A canny look came into Billy's eyes, and she veiled them quickly. Up to the moment, it had been something of a game, this encounter, a game of trying to collect her wits first, then of playing them. Now she meant to find out something definite about the man who had knocked her off solid earth as completely as if a bomb had been dropped through the Plaza roof.

"Right, then! First of all, what are you?"

"Yours to command."

"No—no. I mean, what honorable profession do you grace?"

"The law."

"Good! Then you don't care what you do."

"Oh, I say——"

"I mean—no matter how far you go, you can always find some way to get out of it."

"In other words, the law is made to escape the law."

"Well, one seldom hears of lawyers getting into trouble. If they do, they're not good lawyers."

He laughed.

She watched him, eyes narrowing.

"Do you think you can keep people from finding out who I am?"

"Have to be a good lawyer to accomplish that—with the press of two continents at your heels."

Billy gave a sigh that was born to be a chuckle.

"Haven't caught up with me yet."

"If they do, careful not to let them come down on your toes!"

"That's *your* responsibility now."

He glanced down at her slipped feet.

"You don't give me a very wide area to answer for, do you?"

"But a very uncertain one."

"I know that. Has a habit of slipping away."

They drifted once more into reminiscences, and Billy found herself embroidering her past until she almost believed what she was telling him. She blessed the travel books she had devoured in the hope of one day reaching that Mecca of young art, the Quartier Latin. In Paris, in London, even on the Italian lakes, she felt quite at home. It was only when he mentioned an occasional mutual friend that she felt her craft pitching, and had to take the helm to steer it into safer waters.

The ebony clock on the mantel tinkled six—then six-thirty, but he made no move to go. She didn't particularly want him to. She had begun to enjoy his recollections of their youth together. She could almost see the old house up Westchester way, and herself climbing over the hedge for the morning greeting. It gave her a comfortable, homey feeling. She liked to think of him waiting for her at the other side, arms outstretched to help her over.

"Do you recall the day we climbed the fence into a field marked, 'No Trespassing,'" he asked, "and a bull came trotting along? Lord, I can see you now, flying across the field with your hair all the signal that bull needed!"

Billy pulled a wry face.

"You ought to be ashamed, reminding me of a time when you should have been the hero and saved me!"

He leaned closer.

"Well, now society's going to be the bull. And I'll be there to sling you across my shoulders—and run."

She started to smile in answer, when a key in the hall door and the voice of Fifine froze her lips.

"Mad'moiselle," came the voice, "they 'ave no more ham, so I buy tongue."

Her breath seemed to stop. She tried to meet the gaze of the man beside her, but failed. Her glazed stare went to the doorway, where stood the little French girl, a package of delicatessen held aloft.

"*Tu ne peut pas voir que je suis occupée?*" She brought out at last. "*Va donc!*"

"*Mais les sandwiches!*" Fifine insisted.

"*Va donc!*" Billy glared.

And the girl went, a blubber of tears in her wake.

Billy turned with a sweet smile to Fitzmaurice.

"She has a madness for American sandwiches," she explained. "Since we've been in this country, she absolutely refuses to eat anything else."

"I hope you don't."

"Why?"

"Because I don't. And you're dining out with me."

"Oh—am I?"

"You are. I'm taking you with me, now."

"Really? Where?"

"To a château high up on a hill, with the stars close above us and the lights of New York far below."

"That might be a land of dreams."

"No—of romance."

"I—I'm afraid I mustn't."

"I'm afraid you must."

"Can I trust myself to you?"

"*Always—and all ways.*"

She rose. He rose with her and stood facing her, tall and protective. Instinctively she laid her hand in his.

That night, she sat upright among the cool, smooth pillows, staring into the darkness in the usual way, but with a new wonder in her soul. She had embarked on a wild game, a reckless, unbelievable one. But it was not of to-morrow she thought, not of the ordeal ahead, the opportunity she had longed for and dreaded. For the moment, she had forgotten the part she had played and must continue to play. With eyes like the stars that swung overhead, she was being carried once more over a glistening white road, under a silver-blue sky, in a car that flew like the wind—up, up, with a world gliding gradually into a panorama below; up to a house at the top of a hill, into a low-lighted room, where a number of small white tables with rose-shaded candles waited for occupants, into a far, shadowy corner to a table laid for two.

And beside her, through the twinkling, frosty night, rode the man who had dropped into her life from nowhere. Opposite her in the softly lighted room he sat, the stranger who thought her some one else, whom she might better never see again, who might trip her up and discover the truth at any moment, yet whose quick laugh answered hers, to whom she did not have to explain herself, who somehow spoke the same language. Across the table he had reached a hand and said, "I'm glad I've found you." And, quite simply, she had put her own in the firm clasp and whispered back, "I am, too."

"Don't run away from me again," had been his parting. "Promise!"

She realized that was just what she ought to do. But run away from him! She laughed softly in the darkness. Run away from life, from its infinite risks and possibilities! Run away from a companionship that made her feel secure, even in danger! Run away from strength that sent a warm glow

through her veins. Run away! Yesterday's unhappiness was as if it had never been. Let to-morrow bring what it pleased.

CHAPTER V.

Fifine was unhappy—likewise uncomfortable. In spite of the fact that she had never slept on such a soft bed as the one in the room at the end of the little hall, in spite of the fact that Mad'moiselle Billy had suddenly been transformed into a princess in velvet and furs, in spite of the fact that this room was like a scene in the movies, she wanted to be back in Thirty-ninth Street, with Madame Berger to box her ears, then kiss the tears away.

She went, trembling, to answer the door, and opened it cautiously an inch or so. Dr. Curtiss stood in the corridor. He followed her into the salon and looked around quickly.

"Where's Miss Billy?"

"In bed."

"Bed? Why, it's after eleven."

"She out vair-y late las' night."

"Out? Where?"

"Pour dinner—avec handsome gentleman."

"Tell her I want to see her—right away."

Fifine knocked at the bedroom door and entered. Billy was asleep, head cuddled into an arm and a smile on her lips. Fifine tapped her gently on the elbow.

"Mad'moiselle — Docteur Curtiss come."

Billy sat up and rubbed the dreams out of her eyes.

"What?"

"Docteur Curtiss, he is 'ere."

"Doctor Curtiss—impossible!"

She sprang out of bed, rushed to the silk-hung doors, and opened them a crack.

"Doctor—there's nothing wrong with Jack?"

"No, but there's something mighty

wrong with you. Walk right in here, young woman. I want a few words with you."

Billy assumed her best Nina manner. "Make yourself comfortable. I'll be with you in a moment. Fifine, order coffee for two—with cream."

An hour later, she sat nonchalantly stirring her coffee, while a usually quiet and dignified member of the medical profession paced the floor like the proverbial caged lion. His kindly eyes were startled, his brow deeply furrowed; his hands clasped and unclasped behind his back like a nervous woman's.

"But I tell you, child, it's the maddest thing this side of an insane asylum! When Madame Berger gave me your address, it puzzled me, but I'd no idea you were attempting anything like this."

"I'm not attempting. I'm doing it."

"But—"

"Isn't this cream heavenly thick?"

Curtiss went quickly to the bedroom door.

"Fifine, pack up Miss Billy's things right away. I'm going to take you both home."

Billy laughed

"You are certainly not! I've put too much capital into this investment to withdraw with a loss and no dividends."

"No joking, child. The game's too dangerous."

"Keeping out of danger won't land me anywhere but in the poorhouse."

He stopped in his tramp and faced her reprovingly.

"You should have consulted me before undertaking it."

"Consult a man! Men have no imagination!"

"I can imagine all sorts of things happening to you."

"Don't look so scared. Everybody's bluffing in this town, trying to make you believe he's something that he isn't. Only difference is most of them are

doing it under their own names—and I'm doing it under another woman's."

"It's amazing the reporters haven't already found you out."

"Why, you dear old silly! Whom did you ask for at the desk?"

"No one. Just walked into the elevator and said Miss Hallowell was expecting me."

"Well, there you have it. My own name's my incognito."

He flung out his hands.

"You're too much for me!"

She picked up several letters from the table, ripped them open, and twinkled across them at him.

"Only the dressmakers have been led to suspect that I'm Nina. And they've swallowed the bait—hook, line, and sinker." She tossed the heavily embossed notes to him. "Oh, I've got 'em going, Dr. Steve!"

He got up and went over to her, his eyes still troubled.

"Billy," he said, "a good many years ago—when I was at the beginning, like you—I had dreams of becoming a great surgeon. But I let my first failures shake my faith in myself—I let life get me. That's why, at forty-five, I'm a musty medicine man. That's why I'll probably let you go through with this thing, though I heartily disapprove of the whole proceeding. It may be your chance, and I'd rather have you run risks than be the one to rob you of it."

Billy reached out a hand, and he clasped it silently.

"Then perhaps," she suggested, "you wouldn't mind helping me a bit."

"Help you? Me?"

"Yes. Be Mrs. Courtlandt Van Dyke."

"Mrs. Courtlandt— What in the name—"

"Oh, just for this afternoon. It occurred to me a few minutes ago that you could be very useful. All you have to do is to phone me around five-thirty. And don't be surprised at anything I

say. I shall call you, 'Olive dear,' and ask how in the world you've located me. Then you ask me something about clothes, in a very feminine voice, in case the operator should be listening, and I reply. After which we make a date—for tea, or something."

"But Mrs. Van Dyke! That's the—"

"Exactly. *The* Mrs. Courtlandt Van Dyke."

The bell rang sharply at that moment and cut short Curtiss' remonstrance.

Billy gave a jump and dropped her coffee spoon.

"I can appreciate the feelings of a fire engine. Every time the bell rings, I lose five hundred dollars' worth of nerve."

"Well," observed Curtiss, with a shake of the head, "I should say you have a large supply on hand."

They waited, ears straining. Presently Fifine came in, a flower box in her hand.

"Oh!" Billy sighed with relief. "It's just the flowers I'm sending myself. Green orchids. They're Nina's favorite."

She untied the ribbon, lifted the lid, and gave a little gasp. On a bed of asparagus fern lay a mass of sunrise roses, their warm red gold nested in the green like the sun coming up among summer trees.

"To the lady who made the sun rise and shed its glory over all the world. Luncheon at one." That was the inscription on the card; no name, but none was needed.

Billy buried her face in their fragrance.

"Those are not green orchids," remarked the doctor.

"No—so I see."

"Tell me, child—who is he?"

"Who?"

"The man you were out with last night?"

"How did you know?"

"Fifine."

"He—he's all right. Don't worry about him."

"When did you meet him?"

"Yesterday."

"Billy, for Heaven's sake, don't throw all discretion to the winds!"

"I've told you not to worry. He's an old friend of Nina's."

"Of Nina's! Are you daring to carry the Loring scheme that far?"

CHAPTER VI.

The shades were drawn in the blue and black velvet salon. The fire burned gayly. The side lights were on. From vases on desks and tables green orchids reared their heads. A gentle, alluring perfume pervaded the air. It was all cozy and inviting that sharp December twilight, but the four occupants of the room looked neither one nor the other. For the past half hour, they had been



"The young woman at the Plaza is not Miss Loring."

"He calls me by my first name—I mean, hers—and I'm lunching with him at one."

"How did you meet him?"

"Er—accidentally, one might say."

"And you'd risk seeing him again?"

"I wouldn't risk *not* seeing him again."

He picked up his hat.

"You're hopeless!"

"Never was more hopeful in my life. Don't forget the telephone—five-thirty. And you can drop in and see me at nine if you will. By that time, election returns will be in."

regarding one another with the speculative cunning of soldiers caught in the enemy's trench.

The first to come had been Pierre Obrian, of Hendel et Cie, Coutourières, Paris, London, New York. The maid had informed him that mademoiselle had not returned from luncheon. Pierre was rather short and very slim, with narrow shoulders, waist thin as a wasp's, sleeves short, and collar high. His suit was of dark gray. His spats, waistcoat, and ascot tie were of pearl gray, the latter decorated with a pearl scarfpin. A white silk handkerchief

bordered in gray protruded from his cuff. A boutonniere of violets reposed in his coat lapel. He allowed nothing to ruffle his pearl-gray complacency, but seated himself; his expression excessively bored, and awaited his hostess.

Conroy had come in on him, and both had halted in amazement.

"What are you doing here, O'Brien?" Conroy had asked, his eyes snapping. Conroy was a typical young business man, clean-cut and abrupt.

"I might ask the same. I understood I was the only one——"

"Did you get a letter, too?"

"Yes."

"Damn' funny!" He whisked into a chair, legs crossed, and sat there frowning into the fire.

"And may I inquire," questioned Pierre languidly, "why you persist in purposely mispronouncing my name?"

"I purposely don't mispronounce it, O'Brien. Can't see why the Irish shouldn't be proud of it. I am."

Silence then, while Pierre subsided with a shrug, as if the effort of argument were too much for him, and Conroy impatiently examined his watch. Each gave a start of surprise when Algie Henderson, who represented Kidding & Company, made his appearance. Algie almost fainted at sight of the other two, but, caution being the better part of valor, merely dropped onto the davenport with a brief "Hullo!" By the time Mrs. Douglas Lee Redmond—representing Madame Buff-Harden, otherwise known as Drucille—arrived, the others were evidently prepared for the entrance of all New York. She breezed in, brisk, brittle, and tailor-made, stopped short in the doorway, and gave a gasp.

"Well, look who's here!" She murmured under her breath. Then she swept forward, measuring the three men with a puzzled frown, nodded to each in turn, sat down—and said nothing, too.

After about fifteen minutes of meditation, she broke the silence:

"Say, Nort, what does it mean? Are we being kidded?"

"Search me!" Conroy answered angrily.

"Are you calling on some one very much in the public eye just at present—from the other side of the pond? No names permitted."

"I am."

"Well, I must say, I expected to hog the show! Didn't look for a quartet."

"Same here. Damned outrage, making jackasses of us!"

"Oh, no." She gave a swift, veiled glance at the other two. "Nature beat her to it." She looked toward the bedroom, whence had vanished the wide-eyed French maid. "Where's the charming hostess?"

"Out, I'm told." The words snapped through Conroy's teeth. He kept his watch in his hand. "Royalty's privilege."

"What's the idea, do you think?"

"Don't know. No reason why she should care about money. Isn't here seeking fame—that's a sure bet."

"Well, she's managed to poke us in the ribs hard enough to make us hop. Did she tell you to call her 'Hallowell', too?"

"Yep. It's five to five. At five I quit."

Algie roused himself. Algie was big of frame and small of voice, plump and bland. The crease in his black-and-white-striped trousers was like a knife. His cutaway coat hugged his broad shoulders without a wrinkle. He wore a gardenia in his buttonhole.

"I must say, it's not very courteous, chaffing us this way."

"My dear boy," Pierre murmured undisturbed, "one doesn't look for courtesy in a gentlewoman. Only hoi polloi bother with that."

Mrs. Redmond looked around the group with narrowed eyes.

"Were you all sworn to secrecy, too?"

They nodded.

"Well, I must say, I can't make it out! Will there be any more of us, do you think?"

"Can't say." Conroy shoved the watch into his pocket. "But there'll be one less. I'm going."

"I'm not." Mrs. Redmond settled back in her chair. "I'm nuts to see her. Suppose she'll be dressed like a freak?"

Conroy got up.

"I'll lay fifty to one," he said tersely, "she makes her entrance in sandals and bare legs."

Whereupon the outer door slammed, and Billy came down the hall, her eyes, through the lacy-figured veil that covered them, dancing radiantly. She stopped just outside the doorway, drew herself to her full height, drooped her eyelids, screwed her courage tight, and entered nonchalantly. Her glance barely touched the assembled quartet.

"Am I late?" she inquired with a very British accent and not the slightest interest.

"Not at all—not at all," Pierre hastened to reassure her.

Billy moved toward the bedroom.

"You'll have to introduce yourselves, I'm afraid." Four cards were held out to her. Billy took them without so much as a glance at the names. "How do you do?" she said in a bored voice, and swept into the bedroom.

The door closed. The four sat silent an instant.

"Cordial welcome," observed Mrs. Redmond.

Conroy handed her his handkerchief.

"Wipe the mud off me, will you?"

"What a treat," came from Henderson, "to meet some one really well born!"

Pierre was still staring in the direction of the bedroom.

Mrs. Redmond turned to Conroy.

"Didn't give us time to see just what she looked like, but wish I'd cinched you on that fifty, Nort."

"She's a pippin, I'll admit—but touched by frost."

Billy, meanwhile, with fingers that trembled, was getting out of her street togs into the house gown she had prepared for the occasion. The great moment was here, but it had been so overshadowed by greater moments that for the past few hours she had erased the thought of the task ahead of her. Now it loomed up with an intensity of significance that made her eyes start from her head.

"Were you able to cross the floor without kissing it?" she demanded of Fifine. "Did you know just what to say? Were you listening to what they said, just as I told you?"

"They wonder what it is all a-bout," said Fifine, "jus' like me."

"Never mind about you. Did they seem interested?"

"Oh—oui."

The doorbell rang. Billy heard the last of her callers arrive—evidently Signor Enrico Valente of the Maison Clarice. She heard his strange, thick voice, which might have been Italian and might equally have emanated from another section of the East Side, heard his exclamation of surprise at sight of the others, heard their greeting, and the rapid fire of questions he put to them.

She seated herself at the dressing table, powdered the pink enthusiasm out of her cheeks, laid on a soft layer of cold cream, then powdered a magnolia pallor into them. She was by nature pale, but now she laid it on so thick that her skin looked like creamy velvet. She did nothing to her eyes. Heavy lashed, with their suggestion of hidden fires, they needed nothing. But her lips she made the color of a dark Jack rose, and her red hair she coiled to an exaggerated height away from her

neck. Into it she stuck a glittering green comb. Then she stepped back to survey herself. Billy had vanished completely. As nearly as human hands could accomplish it, the lady in the mirror was a duplicate of the one whose pictures she had been studying for weeks past. Nina Loring might have been standing before her.

CHAPTER VII.

As the door to the bedroom opened, the five occupants of the salon turned in their seats. Then, simultaneously, a slow gasp went around the circle and they were on their feet. In the doorway, stood a creature so startling that she looked unreal. A lizard-green robe, glistening where the light touched it, clung close around her and trailed into a point along the floor. It shimmered like the wet skin of a serpent. When she moved, it took the movement of her supple body as if it were part of her. It suggested Egypt, a tropic moon, high white walls, incense; it suggested anything but a dress. And the face above it as she glided forward—the full lips, the heavy-lidded, half-closed eyes, the mass of red hair waving away from the white forehead—She was certainly an importation to take away the breath!

She paused in the center of the group and drew a hand across her brow.

"Really—do you know," she sighed, "I've forgotten why I asked you here?"

They hastened to remind her that she had summoned them on a mysterious mission.

"And we have come, my dear Miss Loring—" Henderson began.

Billy raised her hand with a slow gesture of reproof.

"I do remember now. But I believe I said that under no circumstances must that name be mentioned."

"We assume," said Conroy curtly, "that you've some proposition to make."

Billy raised her eyebrows with a puzzled frown.

"Some—er—suggestion, Mr. Conroy meant to say," Pierre corrected.

Billy raised her eyes to the ceiling.

"Suggestion — suggestion?" She paused long enough to let the thought sink, and, then, with a shrug of indifference, "Ah, yes—designs—that is it. I thought of showing you a few designs for gowns."

There was a general anxious craning forward.

"They're for sale?" asked Mrs. Redmond.

"Sale! Of course not! Why do you Americans dwell so constantly on money? I loathe money!"

Henderson gave a little ecstatic sigh. Pierre regarded her with the epicurean satisfaction of one who is weary of the bourgeoisie.

"Nevertheless," Conroy put in dryly, "I take it you had some idea in asking us here."

Billy turned her head languidly and looked him over. She was a little afraid of Conroy. Then, as if suddenly awakening:

"Yes—I did have some idea of executing a few commissions, for the benefit of stricken Belgium. But I don't know now. I've grown rather cold."

The statement had the desired effect. Valente flung up his hands, wildly pleading. The rest urged her to let them see her designs.

"No—really—I no longer care to show them."

Meanwhile, her veiled eyes measured them. She must not appear too willing, must not go too far in her refusal. Now that she had got going, she began to feel herself slipping into the rôle with the utmost ease. It is the dread of the cold shower, not the first dash of it, that's hard to endure.

Henderson took in the lines of the gleaming green robe.

"Please—please—don't disappoint us now."

She condescended.

"Well—if you insist. They're really nothing, you know—just a few little drawings. I amuse myself from time to time. It helps one to—forget."

She opened the bedroom door, wearily called to Fifine in French, and asked for her designs. The dress-makers thus had an opportunity to study her at another angle, against a blue-satin-paneled wall beside a black lacquer desk.

She came back with several sketches and tossed them on the table.

"There they are. Nothing, you see—really nothing. But each has a story, an inspiration of its own."

Mrs. Redmond picked up a drawing and smacked her lips.

"This one's a peach!"

Billy glanced over her shoulder, speaking dreamily as if no longer among them.

"Ah, yes—that evening gown. '*Nuit d'amour*,' I call it. Inspired by an evening on Como. Blue of the lake, you see, and silver of the stars. And this tea gown"—she picked up another and held it at arm's length—"Venice gave it to me. '*Rêve d'or*.' Does it not suggest a golden dream? Gold of the moon and emerald of the deep lagoon?"

"What a genius!" Valente's eyes were bright with fervor.

Conroy took the sketches silently, regarding them one by one.

She held out a third, carelessly, with supreme indifference.

"And this ruby velvet—souvenir of an afternoon at Buckingham with her majesty, just after the victory of the Marne. I've named it '*La Couronne*.'"

There were murmurs of "How heavenly!" "Superb!" "Stunning!"

Conroy turned to her.

"Well—what do you want for 'em?"

There was horrified silence. Then Billy calmly looked him over from

head to foot, took up another sketch, and went on as if he had not spoken.

"And this one—suggested by a sunrise on the Nile. You see, we stayed up to see the sun rise. All colors and no colors—scarabs and serpents embroidered on gold tissue—as many moods as Egypt's queen. '*Cleopatra*,' I've named it."

"Quite a corker, that," Mrs. Redmond remarked to Conroy. "Can't you see it cavorting at the Ritz?"

He directed his answer to Billy:

"What's the objection to getting down to brass tacks? We're here on business, I take it."

Billy shuddered.

"Don't! Don't! How can you? What a sordid thought? Art is the only question of interest to me. Money is such a bore."

Conroy was not the least nonplused.

"Well, then, what was the idea in inviting us here, if you don't mind?"

"Oh—just a whim! I was bored and"—with a touch of pathos—"not very happy. And it occurred to me that some creative work in a good cause might divert me. I'd an idea of doing it quietly—without any of the usual cheap publicity. I'm so weary of that sort of thing. But I never imagined there might be loathsome business details to settle. Of course I couldn't undertake an actual contract, or anything of that sort, before consulting an attorney."

The others, with the exception of Conroy, hastened to agree with her.

"How long will you stay in this country?" he asked.

"I can't say—really. It's altogether a matter of mood. I may decide to disappear quite without warning."

She called Fifine and gathered up the designs as if concluding the interview.

There was an instant chorus of protest. And then the phone in the bedroom jingled. Billy knew what it meant. She waited while Fifine's halt-

ing voice answered, waited while the latter entered, bumping against a chair in her anxiety not to. Her one fear was that the girl might publicly announce Dr. Curtiss on the wire, so she managed to move stealthily in her direction as the latter came in. Fifine gave her information sotto voce, and Billy glided indifferently into the bedroom, careful to leave the door ajar.

The dressmakers immediately pounced on the designs. But as the low, murmured words came to them from the bedroom, the plates were dropped and attention galvanized on the telephone conversation.

"Are you there?" Billy began. Then, with the utmost astonishment: "Why, Olive Van Dyke! My dear, how in the world— But you shouldn't have followed me in. Not a soul knows. Surely they told you at the desk I'm Miss Hallowell. You *are* a sly one! Couldn't think of it—I'm not going out at all. But come and tea with me here to-morrow. Your word that you won't tell a soul? It's a terrific secret. Yes, I've a few rags. Copied? Of course you may, but, my dear, I absolutely demand that I choose the modiste. At five, then. Adios."

She rang off and reëntered, pretending not to note the thrill of excitement that had circulated around the room.

"Do you intend," queried Mrs. Redmond shrewdly, "to continue incog?"

"I can't say. It's all so nebulous. Of course, should I decide to affiliate myself with any particular modiste, I shall wish my friends—like Mrs. Van Dyke—to have the advantage of my designing."

"Quite so—quite so!" thrilled Valente.

"As for the money value of my foolish little name, whatever it may yield will be devoted to the Red Cross."

"Then you do consent to talk business," came politely from Conroy.

"Not at all. Not at all. I merely

said—in time I might allow my presence in this country to become known, providing the utmost secrecy is maintained now. As for business—I shall have to postpone any discussion of that until to-morrow." And she ended, very sweetly, "Good day."

There was nothing to do but trail out, Henderson, Obrian, and Valente overwhelming her with tribute, Mrs. Redmond with an enthusiastic "You make Paul Poirer look like Mulberry Street!" and Conroy with a terse "Day."

As the door closed on them, she sank into a chair, the bored look gone from her eyes to leave them shining.

"Bluff!" she laughed. "Camouflage! New York!"

CHAPTER VIII.

She sat there for a long while, reviewing the whole performance. It had been too easy! To-morrow they would come to plead with her, that crowd who yesterday had refused to give her so much as a peep in. To-morrow, because of her very indifference, she would be able to name her own price.

But she reckoned a day late. New York does not wait for to-morrow. When she wants a thing, the spoiled darling, she goes after it—and lands it—to-day.

One by one, the modistes trailed back, some by phone, some in person, each determined to steal a march on the others, each set upon making the prize his own.

Mrs. Redmond, at the other end of the wire, offered her five thousand for six months. Billy inquired if she meant pounds, and being told that the terms were dollars, languidly remarked that she had been under the impression Madame Buff-Harden paid that to her fitters.

"Let's not speak of it, really," she concluded. "Such a bore! Good-by."

The others were treated in similar



"We've got the goods on you. We've had your number since yesterday."

He held out the roll of bills and pointed to the paper. "Take this—and sign that."

Billy stared at the roll—it was lusciously thick—and glanced at the paper.

"B—but—" she began.

"It's only an agreement," he broke in, "giving Dickson exclusive use of your designs for one year at a thousand dollars apiece. This thousand I'm paying you is just for good will—entails no obligation. You stop when you please, do as much as you please. I'll give you a letter stating that it's in no way to be applied as advance payment on anything. We'll call it a little sum for the Red Cross. Now I leave it to you—is that square or isn't it?" The words had been shot at her like swift-flying bullets. They took her breath away.

"B—but—"

"No obligation of any kind," he reiterated. "The thousand simply

fashion, though she was careful to let them know that she might be reached the following morning. She must have time to think things over. It had all been so sudden. She hadn't meant to tie herself down. And so on.

Conroy was the last to come. He blew in like a cyclone just after the door had closed on Valente. Without waiting for an invitation, he sat down at the desk, whipped a paper from one pocket and a roll of bills from the other, and plumped them down before her.

"Yes, I know you don't want to talk money," he interrupted, as she started to protest. "Well, you don't have to."

binds the bargain. Sign here." He took a fountain pen from his vest pocket and thrust it into her hand.

"But—but—"

"All right. We'll make it two." He whipped out another roll.

Billy stared at the money in a dazed sort of way.

"H—how shall I sign?" she found herself saying.

"Your own name, of course."

"But—but—" It seemed to be the only way she could manage.

"All right. Make it 'Hallowell, per Loring.' Any old signature will do. It's your work I want."

Billy signed—dropped the pen.

"There!"

"And here!" He held out the bills.

"Oh, drop it anywhere," said she without a glance.

"Now if you'd had American training," Conroy laughed, "you'd be counting those bills as fast as a bank cashier."

Billy looked him square in the eye.

"How do you know I won't change my mind?"

"That's my gamble," he replied quickly. "But you won't. I think I know a thoroughbred when I see one."

She looked away. He sat down at the desk, scribbled a few lines, and handed them to her. They stated that the two thousand dollars given by him to Nina Loring were evidence of good will, and in no way to be applied as advance payment on any work she might now or in future do for Dickson & Company. It was signed by him, representing the company. Billy gave a nod of approval, laid it on the desk.

"Sorry I can't use the plates you have here, but the others have seen them." He got up, gave her a final glance of appreciation, and a sly laugh came into his eyes. "You're an artist all right. But I've gotta hand it to you. You sure do know how to speed up competition."

He left, saying that he would give her a ring in the morning to find out when she could let them have the first design. Billy promised it within the week. At the rate of one a week, she reckoned, she could make the Plaza her headquarters indefinitely. It left her dizzy. The whole deal had been consummated in a flash.

She dropped down at the desk, wildly counted the bills, and threw up her head with a happy laugh. The journey into the land of adventure had proved worth the risk. On the unknown shores she had found a man who made the world seem worth living in, and a job that would yield her more than enough to make that living possible. She had found the means to put Jack on his feet, to give him courage and renewed faith. She had found hope.

And if a little frowning cloud of fear still hung over her, it was no longer fear for the present. The future, when she would have to reveal to Conroy the fact that she was not Nina Loring, must take care of itself. By that time she hoped to have made a place for herself so secure that no question of identity could affect it.

She sighed contentedly, went into the bedroom, and hugged Fifine.

CHAPTER IX.

In the main corridor of the hotel, a man sat facing the elevators. He seemed not to be looking at them, but merely sat there, twirling a cigarette as if he had nothing better to do. His clothes were conventional and inconspicuous. There was a vacant expression about his eyes. He had been seated in exactly the same position all afternoon, watching the world go in and out, yet exhibiting not the slightest interest.

Presently he roused himself, examined the clock on the wall, and yawned. He strolled toward the eleva-

tor, stepped in, and gave the number of the floor he wanted.

When he stepped out, his nonchalance vanished. He walked quickly along the corridor and pressed the bell of an apartment on the Fifty-ninth Street side. A plump little French maid opened.

"I want to see Miss Hallowell," he announced, and stepped into the hall.

"Name—please?"

He stepped toward the salon.

"Just tell her business—important."

"But mad'moiselle——" she began, eying him uncertainly.

He stepped into the salon and looked around.

"That's all right. I'll wait." He sat down near the desk, with the air of one who had come to stay.

Peeping through a crack of the bedroom door, Billy trembled for the wad of bills she had, in the excitement of a few moments before, left lying there, so temptingly at hand. She hadn't the slightest idea who he was—didn't know whether or not she ought to see him. All she wanted was to keep her eye fastened on the money.

"She'll see me," he said confidently. "Just tell her I'm here relative to that Dickson matter."

Billy waited only long enough for Fifine to reënter the bedroom and close the door. Then she opened it and glided into the other room.

The man rose.

"Miss Nina Loring, I believe?"

Her gaze met his airily.

"What is it you wish?"

"Miss Loring"—he took a step toward her, paused—"you are under arrest."

She made no particular move—just stood there, icy and numb.

"I'm afraid—I don't understand."

He flung back his coat, displaying his detective's badge.

"Nina Loring," he recited, "wanted by Scotland Yard for decamping with

funds collected by her for the Red Cross."

For the first second or two, Billy failed to grasp the significance of it. Then the world dropped completely from under her. She tried to steady herself.

"But—you said to my maid—that Dickson——"

"Oh, I saw their man leave the hotel ten minutes ago. Had to have some introduction, and their name was pretty sure to get you. I see you managed to put over the same game on them that you got away with over there."

He picked up Conroy's letter, which had been lying near the money. But he did not hand it to her. Instead, he folded it carefully and placed it in an inside pocket.

No word came from Billy. She stood facing him rigidly, as if made of stone. Her brain raced like mad.

Suddenly she gave a low laugh that mounted higher and higher until it bordered on hysteria. She tried to stop it, to control the twitching of her lips.

"I—I'm sorry," she managed to tell him finally, "but I'm afraid the joke is on you. I am not Nina Loring. Don't know her—never saw her."

"Have to show me," he answered, undisturbed. He took out the paper, reread it. "You got her earmarks all right. No two women have the same method of gathering in the coin."

"But I tell you——"

"What's this?" His glance rested fondly on the wad. "Collected for the Red Cross like the rest of it, eh? He makes particular mention in the letter that it ain't for services."

"But I tell you my name's Billy Hallowell——"

"Oh, yes, I saw that on the register downstairs. You can tell them all about it when I get you downtown."

"You can't do such a thing to me!"

Billy's eyes began to blaze. "Don't you dare attempt it!"

"Here's the warrant."

"But that's for Nina Loring. Oh, won't you believe me? I'm not——"

"Then what're you using her name for?"

"A private matter—business. I had to. It had nothing to do with——"

She stopped short. He was grinning at her in complete and suave disbelief.

"Won't you believe me?" she pleaded.

"Not Nina?" he chuckled. "Why, you're a dead ringer for her. And it's here," patting his pocket, "black on white. Besides which, there's the phone girl to back it up."

"Phone girl?"

"Sure. Yesterday, when you made the date with the Dickson party."

"You mean—she was——"

"Tapping the wire—that's it. Under orders."

"You were spying on me—then?"

"Well, I wouldn't say—spying. But the hotels have been watched for some time, ever since Mr. Fitzmaurice got wind you'd sailed from the other side."

"Fitzmaurice?" Billy turned on him wonderingly. She was sure she hadn't heard him right.

He nodded.

"Law firm of Clayton, Fitzmaurice & Bowes, retained by the people you fleeced abroad to locate you here."

Billy swayed and drew a hand unsteadily across her eyes.

"You don't mean that he—he's responsible for—for you?"

"I mean that it was through him headquarters found out you were stopping here."

Billy felt shakily for a chair.

"When?"

"Yesterday."

She looked at him defiantly.

"That's impossible. I was Mr. Fitzmaurice's guest at dinner last night, and lunched with him to-day. He wouldn't have done that if——"

"Sure! He wanted to keep an eye on you." He grinned at her again.

Billy's eyes went black with the dull look of the dead.

"I'm telling you facts," he added, "to show there ain't a chance in the world of putting over anything on us. No use trying any more bluff."

She made a desperate effort to drag her mind from the one thought that was paramount—Fitzmaurice! How he must have laughed, the man who had seized hold of her imagination to trick her! She turned swiftly to the detective.

"If I can prove to you that I'm not Nina Loring—that I've never been in England—never been abroad——"

"When you do—there's still this little paper to account for." He tapped his pocket.

"What do you mean?"

"Her name's on it."

"But I can explain——"

"Plenty of chance to do that downtown. No use wasting time now. Come along—the quieter, the better. I got a taxi downstairs."

"You're not going to force me to——" Her lips trembled so that she could scarcely speak. "You can't arrest me like this, without giving me a chance. If I prove—down there—that I'm not Nina Loring, it—it will mean trouble for you."

"Not a bit of it. If you're Nina, the charge is embezzlement. If you ain't, it's soliciting money under false representation, a bunko game. Any way, it's a felony."

Billy's head swam dizzily. Then her arms dropped. It was hopeless. She stood absolutely alone at the edge of a precipice. She closed her eyes and prepared for the fall.

CHAPTER X.

There's a very particular club in the neighborhood of the Forties, a club that numbers among its members men

from every conceivable walk of life. You're apt to meet your tailor there—if he's a good enough tailor—or the composer of the latest rag, or the president of the trust company where you bank. You may even see them dining together. For it's generally understood that more business is conducted over the small, round tables in what was once known as the "Rathskeller" than is visible to the naked eye.

Any way you look at it, the place is pervaded with a Utopian democracy, and few questions are asked. A man is accepted for what he is—or seems to be.

All of which may seem irrelevant, except that it explains how two gentlemen seldom if ever seen together in public happened to be dining there the night of Billy Hallowell's arrest. They were Peter Fitzmaurice, of the law firm of Clayton, Fitzmaurice & Bowes, and Waldo Blakeley, confidential secretary to Police Commissioner Kitchell.

They had dined together at the club twice during the past ten days, though Blakeley realized that the honor thus granted him had been due entirely to his chief's absence in Canada. Had Kitchell been in town, Fitzmaurice would not have conferred with his secretary on matters of moment. For which absence, Blakeley was duly grateful. His host was a good man to be seen about with, even in the bohemian atmosphere of the club aforementioned, and the dinner was exceptional.

He looked across the smooth white table. Fitzmaurice was casually twirling his wineglass, a smile at the corners of his rather thin lips. There was an odd look, too, about his eyes, a look of satisfaction not quite satisfied:

"You have the look," remarked Blakeley, "of a man who's done a good day's work."

"I have."

Blakeley glanced cautiously at the next table to make sure it was unoccupied.

"Yes?" he prompted, as Fitzmaurice failed to go on. "The Loring matter, of course."

The latter leaned across the table.

"Blakeley," he began, "that case you mentioned a week or so ago, the one the commissioner expected trouble from—Hallowell was the name, wasn't it?"

Blakeley looked his surprise.

"The pair that are trying to blackmail the chief, you mean?"

"Exactly."

"Yes, Hallowell's the name."

"Husband and wife?"

"No. Brother and sister—they say."

"What are the exact details?"

"Started out as a bunco game, pure and simple, according to my idea. But the man got the worst of it without expecting to. You know the swine that get themselves run down to collect big damages. Well, this one miscalculated distance this time—and his leg's out of commission. He wants fifty thousand for it."

"And the woman—what's she like?"

"Slick one."

"Appearance, I mean."

"Red hair, thin, pale, inscrutable eyes—damn' clever actress. You know the type."

"Yes, I know the type."

"Not the sort you'd turn to look at, mind you. That's the worst of it. Inconspicuous, rather. She could put over the injured-innocence gag to the queen's taste. That's her pose just now, at any rate."

"But you think, if she wanted to, she could be charming—and attractive?"

"Absolutely. Not that she's my idea of a beauty—not by any means. But there's something about red-haired women—"

"I've noticed that."

"Seems to get some men. She's got an old fossil of a doctor at Roosevelt going until he's ready to perjure his soul for her."

"What's his name?"

"Curtiss — Dr. Stephen Curtiss. Threatens to corral the whole hospital force to back her up."

"H'm." Fitzmaurice rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"And the chief's afraid of that—if the thing gets into court. Of course I'm of the opinion it never will, though the girl threatens they'll go the limit. Naturally, she would. It's part of the holdup."

"Naturally."

"They can't win. We'll fix that, of course. But it wouldn't be likely to do the chief any good—unless we can round them up and show them for what they are."

"I see."

"Of course if we can get anything on them, they'll both go up the river. But the man's leg certainly is out of commission. And the girl's apt to be a slippery one."

"You've an idea she could carry off any rôle she elected to play?"

"I'm convinced she could."

"H'm," said Fitzmaurice again.

He sat silent while the waiter served the chicken and poured another glass of wine. He was frowning heavily. Blakely noticed admiringly that the line of his mouth had gone harder. He wished Fitzmaurice might have the girl on the grill here and now. He'd give no quarter. Fitzmaurice seemed to read the thought.

"If the commissioner does get something on them, how far will he go?" he asked.

"The limit—and then some," laughed Blakely.

"Tell me something more about them. What do they claim to be?"

"Girl says she's an artist. Man claims to be a mining engineer."

"Then he must have had some job——"

"No. Been in New York only a few

months, at the time of the accident. At least, that's the story they gave me."

"Have you looked them up?"

"Yes."

"Any record?"

"No. I tell you, they're slippery. Only way to get them is to trip them some way."

Fitzmaurice smiled. It wasn't a pleasant smile.

"Of course they wouldn't appear to have any money on hand."

"Certainly not. Live in one room in a lodging house kept by a little old Frenchwoman. Never've seen the girl in anything but a shabby blue suit or one of those big aprons."

"H'm. She is a clever actress."

"What's that?"

Fitzmaurice had murmured the words, almost to himself.

"Oh, nothing—nothing," he said, and looked across the table at Blakely with a narrow smile. For a moment he said nothing more, but his hand clenched on the white cloth, and his face took on the iron look it so often wore in court.

"She waits on the man hand and foot," Blakely went on. "That's what makes me think he's not her brother."

"I see."

"That brother-and-sister gag covers a multitude of sins, anyhow. Chicken's getting cold, old man."

Fitzmaurice pushed his plate to one side and lit a cigarette. The quizzical smile still played about his lips, as if he were forced to laugh at some joke he didn't exactly enjoy.

"Been to see them lately?" he said at last.

"Not since the chief's been away. No use appearing anxious to settle. Playing into their hands, that would be. Indifference is the way to scare them into settling out of court."

"By the way, what's the girl's first name?"

"Name? Billy."

"Odd name for a girl."

"Probably isn't bona fide any more than the 'Hallowell.' May have any number of aliases."

"Probably has," Fitzmaurice agreed. He finished his salad in silence, then took out a pencil and began drawing designs on the cloth. And the smile that wasn't pleasant never left his lips. Blakeley watched him curiously. It suddenly flashed over the commissioner's confidential secretary that he and Fitzmaurice were dining together for the express purpose of discussing the Loring case. And here was dinner being consumed with details of an affair in which Fitzmaurice had evinced only slight interest when it had first been mentioned some ten days gone.

"By the bye," he suggested tactfully, "as to developments in the Loring matter——"

"Ah, yes—the girl at the Plaza." Fitzmaurice picked up the menu. "Haven't ordered dessert. What'll you have?"

Blakeley selected the particular pudding concoction for which the club's chef was famous. Fitzmaurice ordered coffee.

"Make it strong," he said. "No cream or sugar."

"The girl at the Plaza—Miss Loring," prompted Blakeley when the waiter had gone, and gave another cautious glance around the room.

"Ever try to reckon, Blakeley, how many threads a spider has to spin before he can make a satisfactory web?"

The other gave him a stare of bewilderment.

"I—er—can't recall that I have."

"Well, do it some time. Watch how carefully the little fellows have to work. Then break one gauzy thread and see the whole web collapse."

"Quite so."

"Of course, it's just possible the fly will be caught before the web goes to

pieces. If he isn't, the laugh's on the spider, isn't it?"

"It—er—seems logical," Blakeley agreed.

"All of which merely goes to prove," Fitzmaurice mused, "that the cleverest spider can readily make an ass of himself. Mixed metaphor, but I take it you get what I mean."

"Not—er—exactly, I must confess."

"Then, to put it more clearly, I was absolutely mistaken in my deductions when I communicated with headquarters yesterday."

"What?"

"The young woman at the Plaza is not Miss Loring."

"Not Miss Loring?"

"Exactly."

"But, my dear man——"

"By the bye," Fitzmaurice put in somewhat irrelevantly, "when does the commissioner get back?"

"Late to-night or first thing in the morning. I wired him to-day. Important developments in the Loring case."

"Well, don't worry," said Fitzmaurice, with rather a dry laugh. "There will be."

"You think, then——"

"When he gets here"—again that laugh—"I think I'll have some news of real importance to him."

Blakeley lifted his liqueur glass to the light, examining with the eye of a connoisseur the golden liquid, oily and smooth. Fitzmaurice stirred his black coffee, the smile that was not pleasant disappearing. In its place there came into his odd-set eyes a measuring look that would have made a prisoner at the bar quail. It was the look of a judge passing sentence.

"Suppose we have a look-in at the Winter Garden," Blakeley suggested.

Fitzmaurice looked up absently into the smoke-laden air.

"Sorry," he said, and glanced at the time. "Can't make it. An appointment—I'm due now."



He signed the check. They got up and went into the hall. Blakeley was sliding his arms into his seal-lined coat when a page-boy passed, droning a name: "Blakeley-y—Mr. Blake-ley-y-y. Phone call for Mr. Blake-ley-y-y."

Fitzmaurice apologized for not waiting and hurried out into the sharp, frosty night.

Blakeley followed the boy to a telephone booth. When he came out, there was a smile in his somewhat bland eyes. The call had been from police headquarters. He was sorry Fitzmaurice hadn't waited. Whether she was Nina Loring or not, they'd rounded up that girl at the Plaza.

Still smiling, he had the man at the door call a cab and drove downtown.

CHAPTER XI.

The room was rigid in outline and sparsely furnished. A flat-top desk occupied the center, with a reading lamp so placed that the light fell away

It was then that, without a word, she fainted.

from the man in the swivel chair at one side of it and flared full on the face of the girl at the other. He sat back comfortably, regarding her with supreme satisfaction. The apprehension of this slick little article was certainly a feather in his cap. He was big, burly, and red-faced, with eyes that might have been kindly had they not looked fifty times a day on the tragedies of life. At the moment they were absolutely pitiless.

The girl who faced him was strangely incongruous against the severe, blank walls of the room. The long serpentine lines, the scintillant green of her dress undulating with each move of her body, her red hair piled high and caught with a glittering comb—all, away from a fitting background, marked her every inch the adventuress. Within the setting of police headquarters, she looked tawdry and theatric, almost burlesque. Small wonder that, to Inspector Mc-

Alarney, she looked as if she might have put over an endless chain of bunko games. But her eyes were tragedy incarnate. Black circled and dark with pain, they settled on his.

"Now, young woman," he was saying, "let's get down to cases. I've tried kid-glove methods, and you won't open up. Suppose we chuck the glove in the ring. Sit down!"

She took the chair opposite him.

"For almost an hour, I've been trying to make you cough up some information. Well, understand, I don't quit until I get facts. Do you get me?" He drew his chair closer to the desk. "No use stalling. We've got the goods on you. We've had your number since yesterday."

She shuddered—said nothing.

"So come across, Miss Nina Loring—"

"I'm not Nina Loring."

He glanced from her to a picture on his desk, and grinned.

"I'm not Nina Loring," she repeated dully.

"All right, then—Hallowell. That's the name on the register."

"That's not my name, either," came in a choked voice.

"No? Then what is it?"

"Jones—Smith—anything you like."

"So that's the game, eh? Well, hand me a list of your aliases, and we'll look you up in the gallery. May be able to locate you by one of them."

"Oh—how can you—how dare you talk to me like that? As if—as if I were a common criminal!"

"No, not common." McAlarney made her a bow across the desk. "I'll hand it to you there." His jaws came together tight. "But get this straight—I'll do more than talk before I'm through. I told you—I'm after facts, and I don't stop at anything to get them."

Billy opened her lips, as if desperation were forcing the words in spite of

her. Then, with a supreme effort, she shut them tight and gripped the desk to steady herself. No matter what they put her through, the truth must be kept from Jack!

McAlarney's quick eye saw her waver, saw the tug she made not to let go. Swift as a streak of lightning, his tactics changed. His tone became wheedling.

"Whichever charge you go up on, it's a penitentiary offense. You know that, don't you?"

She closed her eyes a second, and the dark circles around them went darker.

"Larceny," he mused, as if to himself. "It ain't a pretty prospect, now is it? And the minimum penalty is—"

"Oh, please—please—" She turned from the light, and her nails dug deep into the flesh of her palms.

"Well, then, come along—be sensible. You don't want to hurt your own case, now do you? It's plain as the nose on your face you ain't the usual brand—whether you name's Smith, Jones, or Sally in Our Alley. All we want is to clear this thing up for you. You wanta help us, now don't you?"

She looked across at him in desperate silence.

"Don't you, now?"

"I—I don't know—"

"Come—come. What's the use of hedging? I can make it easy for you—or I can make it hard."

She wet her lips, met his searching look dumbly.

"D'you think we're aching to run people into jail? We want to keep them out if we can. Now I dare say you can explain the whole thing to our entire satisfaction, can't you?"

Words came at last.

"If you'll just give me time," she pleaded.

"Time?" His voice went harsh and gruff again. "Hell! I've been giving

you nothing but time. We'll get to rock bottom without you—and when we do, you'll be damn' sorry you didn't help us!"

"Will you tell me just one thing, please. That's all I ask—all I want to know. Who's responsible for my being here? Who—who gave you the information that led to—to my arrest?"

"What difference does that make?"

"The man who brought me here—he said it was Mr. Fitzmaurice—Fitzmaurice of Clayton, Fitzmaurice & Bowes, the attorneys. I—I just wanted to be sure—that's all."

"He's the one who nabbed you." McAlarney smiled once more with satisfaction. "That is, he notified me yesterday that he'd located you. I did the rest. You see, my dear young woman, how useless it is to try to fight a man of his influence—in addition to the police department?"

"Yes—I see—how useless it is."

"Well, then—come across."

"I have—nothing to say."

He leaned over the desk and shot his next words at her.

"Look here—you ain't shutting up tight for your own sake! When a woman knows how to hold her tongue, ten to one some man's got it tied!"

Billy's breath caught.

"I see what we'll have to do—we'll have to lay a trap for him."

"No—you're absolutely wrong!"

"I'll soon find out."

She wanted to plead with him, to cry out: "Let me go! Won't you let me go?" She pulled herself up sharp. At any cost, she must keep silent. She must keep them away from Jack.

He had caught, however, the tremor that seized her.

"Uh—huh! On the right scent, eh?"

"There's no one concerned in this—but me."

"We'll soon find out," he repeated indifferently.

"If there were—do you think I—I'd face it alone?"

"Just exactly what you would do."

"Oh, why are you torturing me like this? I tell you, I'm not guilty of any crime! I'm not Nina Loring!"

He picked up a paper from his desk, a paper stating that Dickson & Company herewith paid to Miss Nina Loring two thousand dollars as evidence of good will.

"Then you've been using her name with design to defraud."

"I had no design to defraud."

"Ah—now we're coming to it!"

"None in the world. Oh, won't you believe me?"

"Then why did you use her name?"

"It was a mistake."

"I should say it was! Now suppose you tell me your own."

She hesitated.

"Can I—I should like to send a note to some one."

McAlarney pushed pen and paper across the desk and watched her from under lowered lids while she steadied her hand to scribble a line. The ink splattered across the sheet, the letters straggled dizzily. And, after all, McAlarney gained little information. It was addressed to Dr. Stephen Curtiss, Roosevelt Hospital, asked him to come at once, and was unsigned.

She had just added the period when the door to the outside corridor opened, and a man sauntered in. He stood silent on the threshold a second, his blind eyes traveling the length of Billy's glittering green gown. The look in them was one of impersonal curiosity until she raised her head.

Then each took a step backward. The girl's hand went to her throat, and clung there. The man started to smile, and gradually the smile spread over his face until the bland eyes were mere slits. He flicked an imaginary speck from his sleeve. He moistened his lips with the antici-

tion of an epicure about to enjoy a choice morsel. And then he spoke.

"Am I to understand, Mac, that this is the young woman you phoned me about?"

"The same."

"So she's Nina Loring?"

"No. Says she ain't."

"Quite so. She's not."

"Well, she's raked in some coin on the strength of the name all right." The inspector handed over the Dickson paper.

The other gave the ghost of a whistle as he read.

"No, she's not Nina. But nevertheless I anticipate she'll be a—er—guest of the city for some time to come." And then he glanced at Billy and laughed. "Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!" he brought out between breaths. "This must have been what Fitzmaurice meant! And believe me, it's going to be nuts for the chief!"

The inspector regarded him blankly, questioningly.

He checked his mirth at last and strolled up to the desk.

"Meanwhile, you can hold her—with-out bail. I'll give you all the details you want."

CHAPTER XII.

The city had been thrilled to within an inch of its busy life by the news in the evening extras. Nina Loring had been found! And in the good old U. S. A.! And she was actually under arrest!

The next edition informed them that the woman might possibly not be Miss Loring. But the thrill was there just the same. Interesting developments were imminent. Whoever the woman arrested, the case would be worth following. And the fact did remain that the spectacular figure that for weeks had made women envious and men curious had decamped with Red Cross funds, instead of being picturesquely afloat in the Thames. The reason why

said fact had been kept a secret by the police, the papers said, was the desire of Miss Loring's friends that an inquiry be conducted as quietly as possible. But the conservatism of England knows no recognition in the land of free speech. On L trains, in the subway, in crowded street cars, papers were spread out. In back kitchens and front parlors, the news was devoured and digested.

Billy realized, as soon as she was able to think with any semblance of clarity, how absurd it was to imagine that she could keep her plight from Jack very long. Blakeley would see to that.

She waited anxiously for Curtiss. He alone would know how to approach Jack with the news. But the doctor did not come. She learned that the message she had sent him had been left at Roosevelt, since he was not there when it arrived. Then she remembered having told him to call at the Plaza at nine. Would they tell him there?

She did not know that her name, blazoned in red headlines, spread itself across the first page of the yellows like letters of fire. She did not know that Fifine, under examination, had blubberingly told how mad'moiselle had dressed her up in frills she'd never worn before. She did not know that already Mr. Waldo Blakeley's efficient hand was reaching for Jack Hallowell.

Without noticeable loss of time, a plain-clothes man had been sent to the old brownstone house in West Thirty-ninth Street.

CHAPTER XIII.

A taxi tore down Broadway, leaping over the hard mounds of snow, sliding onto the trolley tracks when there was room, jogging and jumping, while the occupant sat, watch in hand. Eighty-fourty-four! He leaned out of the window and asked the man on the box if he couldn't make better time. The lat-

ter swore and asked if he had money enough to pay the fine. They dashed into the downtown section, then east to Center Street, and, with a jerk that threw both men forward, pulled up before the bulky old pile where the history of crime is housed.

The man sprang out, thrust into the driver's hand a bill that made the latter's frozen face thaw into smiles, and was up the steps with long, swift strides.

Five minutes later, he was closeted with Inspector McAlarney. For half an hour or so, they talked, at the end of which time he rose. His eyes, oddly set, were hard and the color of steel.

"So we're holding her, without bail, until the commissioner gets back," McAlarney was saying.

"Have you given me all the facts?"

"All we've got."

"Where's Blakeley?"

"Left. Won't be back to-night."

"That agreement with Dickson & Company that your man picked up in the girl's apartment—let me have a look at it, will you?"

McAlarney handed over the paper.

"That'll send her up for five years, or I'll miss my guess."

Fitzmaurice scanned it carefully.

"Looks pretty bad."

"Got the goods on her all right."

Fitzmaurice returned the paper.

"Let me see her, will you?"

McAlarney made a wry face.

"Got a hard tussle ahead of you. She's a slick one. Can't make her open her face."

Fitzmaurice took to striding up and down.

"She's got to!"

"She won't."

"I'll manage it. Some trick——"

"Trick! I've tried every trick on the calendar!"

"Let me have a go at it."

"If I can't make her open up, hundred to one you can't."

"She may be afraid——"

"She wouldn't be afraid of the Evil One. No, sir—she's protecting somebody."

Fitzmaurice turned sharply, and his jaws clicked.

"And to my mind," the inspector went on, "it ain't the brother Blakeley's sent for, either."

"You think that, eh?"

"One rule you can always work on in this game, Mr. Fitzmaurice. Never knew it to fail. Whenever you nab a nifty skirt, look for the guy that's in with her on the proposition."

Fitzmaurice was silent a moment.

"Has she sent for an attorney?"

"No. Only for some doctor at Roosevelt. Curtiss is the name."

"Has he come?"

"Couldn't be located."

"Good. Have her brought in—then slip out and leave her with me."

He seated himself in a dark corner outside the circle of light made by the green-shaded desk lamp.

In a few minutes, the door was opened, and Billy entered. Her eyes traveled quickly around the room, then settled with a look of despair upon McAlarney.

"Come here," he said.

She came slowly toward him, her step dragging. He got up and stood glaring down at her.

"Now listen here, young woman——"

"McAlarney, if you don't mind——"

Fitzmaurice broke in, stepping into the light.

At the sound of his voice, Billy gave a low gasp, more like a sob, and turned wildly toward the door. Her movement of flight encouraged McAlarney. It was the first sign of actual fear he had seen her show. Just so can stolid immobility deceive the masculine mind.

"Oh, no, you don't!" he told her, and, with a smile to Fitzmaurice, "Let me know when you're through." He

went into an adjoining room, closing the door.

Billy sank into a chair at the desk, head bent, hands clasped tensely. She must face him squarely. He must never know that with him had come the beginning of the world—and the end. That much, at least, she could spare herself.

He broke the silence by coming over and resting a hand on the arm of her chair.

"What made you do it?" he asked abruptly.

She forced herself to look up at him, her lips twisting into what she tried to make a contemptuous smile. The face bent over her was sharply outlined against the light from the lamp. The lines were cut deep, with shadows accentuating the high cheek bones. The expression was hard, determined. It seemed somehow an utterly different face from the one she had smiled into yesterday.

The words caught in her throat. The twisted smile died before it was born.

"Really—don't you think you've had enough of a laugh at my expense?"

"I can't help you unless I know the truth."

"Help me!" The laugh came to her lips then, long and quivering. "Help me? That—do you know?—that's funny!"

"You think I don't mean it?"

"You've put me here as a confidence woman. Isn't that enough for one day's work?"

"That's what they've told you?"

"It's true, isn't it?"

"Only in part. I didn't know who you were then."

"Do you know now?"

"Yes. But I need some further information—and you're going to give it to me."

She gazed at him, fear once more in her eyes; then, without a word, she got to her feet and started toward the

door. He grasped her wrist, and swung her about so that she faced him.

"Listen to me! You've got to listen!"

She laughed at him.

"You don't expect me to believe anything you say?"

"I'll make you believe everything before I'm through."

"Yes. You—you're clever at that."

"I went up to the Plaza to see you to-night," he pursued. "And when they told me what had happened, I rushed down here."

In her eyes he could read nothing but shrinking distrust.

"You played your game well. Aren't you glad they've got me?"

"I'd move heaven and earth to free you!"

She laughed again, but it ended on the high note like a suddenly broken bell.

"I notified them here last night that I had been mistaken in my identification of Miss Loring. But they went ahead with the investigation on their own. They sent up to the hotel, interviewed the telephone operator and house detective, and the report that came back resulted in a warrant. McAlarney gave me that much to-night. Had I known it earlier——"

"How did you know your identification was wrong?"

"You weren't Nina—that's all. In spite of the resemblance, I knew it. It may have been your way of answering questions. It may have been the thorough Americanism of you. I knew Nina as a child—and—you—you were different."

"Then it was true——" she turned on him quickly—"that story you told me?"

"Every word. That's why my associates asked me to take charge of the case when we were retained by Miss Loring's friends in England. She had disappeared with Red Cross funds, and evidence came to light that she'd sailed for this country."

"But why wasn't all that in the papers?"

"They knew her eccentricities over there and wanted an investigation conducted as quietly as possible. I've kept in touch with the hotels," he went on, "for any possible trace of her. And I've kept in touch with them down here. When you appeared at the Plaza, the resemblance was noticed immediately. Yesterday one of the house detectives notified me that a telephone operator had overheard some one in your suite addressed as 'Miss Loring.' I went up there, verified it, and communicated with headquarters."

"After introducing yourself to me as an old friend, you communicated with the police!"

"No. I phoned here before I met you. That was my mistake. I'm answering for it now."

"Mistake—because I'm not Miss Loring?"

"Mistake—because you're you."

"I'm held on a criminal charge. Do you mean you had nothing to do with that?"

"Nothing."

"I don't believe it."

"I give you my word."

"I don't trust it."

She looked quickly away from him. She dared not see the warmth that had come into his eyes.

"Whether you believe it or not, you're going to accept my advice in a legal capacity—as you would some stranger you'd paid."

"Does the defendant usually consult the plaintiff's counsel?" Her voice went cold and bitter. She must not permit herself to be influenced again into letting him hoodwink her.

His answer was to catch hold of her elbows and force her into the light.

"Listen to me, Miss Billy Hallowell! You're going to tell me, here and now, why you're guilty of a bunko game that's likely to land you up the river!"

A shudder shook her. She caught her lip between her teeth to still its trembling.

"Please—let me go, won't you?"

"You're going to tell me——"

"Don't waver! Don't let him see! Don't make a fool of yourself!" cried her soul.

"McAlarney has a paper from Dickson & Company that was found in your rooms." He spoke rapidly without loosening his hold. "Has Dickson anything with your signature?"

She hesitated, looked him full in the eyes, then answered, "Yes."

"How did you sign?"

"I don't—I don't quite remember. 'Hallowell, per Loring,' I think."

"H'm." His brows came together.

"Bad, that. You see, under false representation, you *have* accepted two thousand dollars."

"But I haven't," she found herself protesting. "I can make good to Dickson. I can—I can! I'm ready to deliver the goods if they'll let me. It's not as if I had no returns to make."

Her voice had softened; tears were in it. She was frankly pleading.

"The fact remains that you've put through a business deal, signed and sealed, under another woman's name."

"And that means imprisonment?"

"Now will you give me the whole truth?" he demanded, and bent closer.

"You cheated me once——"

"Will you give me the truth?"

"How do I know you won't cheat me again?"

"Things couldn't be worse than they are. Shall I tell you what I know of you?" His voice went deep with fury. "Shall I? You're a slick one, a swindler, a blackmailer——"

"No—no!"

"What happened at the Plaza only backs up a game you tried to put over on New York's police commissioner."

She turned on him swiftly, her voice shaking.

"Who told you that?"

"Never mind who told me. Subsequent events back it up."

"It's not true! It's not true!"

"Then, for God's sake, be reasonable! You've run yourself into a position that's bad from every angle. I can't make you out. Everything you've done, every move you've made, points to you as an impostor and a swindler. They've got you tied up tight. And to all intents and purposes, they're right. There's nothing to prove you're not. You haven't said one word to convince me to the contrary. Why, do you know what I ought to do? I ought to walk out of here and let you take your medicine. I ought to wash my hands of you. Damn it!" He caught hold of her again, bent close. "Look at me! Who and what are you?"

Billy broke down then. It was the final humiliation, letting him see her tears.

"Oh, why didn't you let me alone?" she sobbed. "If I told you the truth, you wouldn't believe it, and it wouldn't change things. Nothing I do—nothing I say—can help. I did use her name. I did accept money under it. But I did it to help some one I love. And I've brought ruin on us both."

He gripped her arms more tightly.

"Tell me—just what do you mean by that?"

She did not answer at once. The fear shot through her that in some way she might involve Jack.

He misunderstood her silence.

"This Curtiss," he said abruptly, watching her, "who is he?"

"What—what makes you ask?"

"You want to see him, don't you?"

"He's my doctor." She looked up, startled by his tone. "Please don't think he had anything to do with this!"

"You want to see him?" he repeated.

"I did send for him. But if it's not safe—"

"I'll answer for that."

Without another word, he turned, went to the door of the adjoining room, opened it, and spoke to McAlarney.

"Well, Mr. Fitzmaurice," she heard the inspector ask, "accomplish anything?"

She did not hear Fitzmaurice's reply.

"Blakeley just phoned," the other went on. "Told him you were here. He said he'd see you first thing in the morning."

There were a few whispered words. Then Fitzmaurice walked past her and out of the door.

Billy looked after him, and her lips curled slowly. Blakeley would see him in the morning! So that had been the game! He had drawn her out, made her hand over enough information to hang herself. The mere fact that he knew of the paper with her signature that Conroy held had placed in his hands direct evidence against her. And all the while he had been working with and for the enemy! In spite of the fact that she had been on guard against him, he had trapped her once more. She was rather amused at the ease with which he'd done it.

Inspector McAlarney lodged himself comfortably in his swivel chair, and swung about, puzzling meanwhile over the swift change that had come into her tawny eyes. It was a calculating look, almost one of amusement, as if her mind were laughing at some one. It was the look of a woman thinking, and thinking women always bothered him. If you could play on their emotions, you had 'em, but when they belonged to the mental class, the Lord alone knew when and where they'd stop.

At this juncture, the door to the outer corridor opened. A detective came in, grinning broadly. Billy's eyes strayed past him. Back of him stood Madame Berger. And along the lighted hall came two men, half carrying, half dragging Jack.



She gave the whole story in a low voice, without any play at dramatics.

It was then that, without a word, she fainted.

CHAPTER XIV.

Billy spent the night in jail. Strangely enough, her most intense emotion throughout the long, miserable hours was one of self-disgust. There is nothing romantic about the emotion of self-disgust. There isn't even a vestige of drama in it. It's a bald, bare stripping of sham, a face-to-face interview with naked truth.

In the clammy, dark hours, when the only sound that came to her was the occasional clang of iron on stone, Billy arraigned herself before a bar of justice, and no judge could have been more merciless. The only thought that brought her to the verge of breakdown was "Jack!" Then only did her impotence choke her.

She had pleaded with McAlarney to let him go. It was useless. And Jack himself had interfered, saying that he wanted to be near her no matter where they put him.

And so midnight had come, and Billy sat on a stool, head against the cold wall, hands clasped so tight that the knuckles went blue, and steeled herself to meet what to-morrow might bring forth. There would have to be a lawyer, of course. But with no funds, what sort of lawyer could she hope to get? Surely not one clever enough to drag her out of this mire of her own making!

One thing she did conclude in the long watch—she must depend, in this crisis, upon no one but herself. Even if Dr. Curtiss did appear in the morning—which of course he would—there was nothing he could do.

She couldn't have told at what hour she roused herself from her cramped position. The day must have been dull, for the light was not much brighter than when it had first begun to trickle through the high windows. She summoned courage finally to speak to the guard, and found out that she would very likely be remanded to the Tombs that day. Then she asked for a newspaper and, steadying herself, opened it to find out what they were saying about her. By this time, she was prepared for anything—anything, that is, but the headline that greeted her:

NINA LORING MAKES STATEMENT.

**Fascinated by News of Her Arrest.
Regrets It Is Not True.**

Billy brushed a hand across her eyes, sure that the tears had blinded them. She looked at the caption again. There it was, exactly as she had first read it. Nina Loring was in New York, had given an interview! She had stated unequivocally that being arrested was a sensation she had never experienced, that to her regret she must confess she was not the woman held by the authorities. The liveliest paper in town had uncovered the real Nina, and proceeded to blazon the fact to an astonished public. There could be no doubt as to her identity this time.

Late last night, it informed its readers, a telephone call had come from a woman who claimed to be Miss Loring. A reporter had been sent to the address given, a small hotel near Washington Square, and had found a lady in black who undoubtedly appeared to be a duplicate of the famous Anglo-American. She had received him cordially and expressed amazement over the whole affair. She had had no idea, she explained, that she had been wanted by the police. Otherwise, she'd have been delighted to accommodate them. As a matter of fact, she had had not

the slightest intention of "disappearing" when she had left England. She had merely slipped off without letting any one know and had thought it would be rather a lark to use a passport procured by her maid. It was not until she reached this side and saw the papers that she realized, to use her own words, that "a delicious mystery" had been made of her disappearance.

"Sweet of them to drag the Thames for me, wasn't it?" said Miss Loring.

Reminded of the Red Cross funds she had collected, she had smiled in rather a bored way and issued the astounding information that said funds had been quietly subscribed to the American Red Cross as an anonymous gift.

"I'd never have dreamed of doing it just that way," she told the reporter, "had not your charming newspapers given me the idea of remaining under cover, as it were."

By special request, no publication of the gift had been made, but she now invited the public in general to communicate with Mrs. Coudert, of the New York County Chapter, and any one who wished might quickly discover that, early in November, said chapter had received anonymously the amount of twenty thousand, four hundred and three dollars, and sixty-one cents. The interview ended with a staggering list of millionaires, men and women, who could identify her.

After spreading the story across the front page, the reporter had concluded with a speculation as to what would become of the woman the police were holding.

And so Miss Billy Hallowell now took the center of the stage.

CHAPTER XV.

It was a little before nine when Blakeley, going toward the chief's offices, unexpectedly ran into Fitzmaurice. The latter was pacing up and

down the corridor. Blakeley gave him a mild look of surprise that galvanized into startled amazement. He had never seen Peter Fitzmaurice other than calm, master of himself in any situation. This morning the man's face was haggard, his hair, roughed where nervous fingers had plowed through it, and his eyes had the look of a sleepless night. He might have been one of his own victims under cross-examination. With him was a man whom Blakeley recognized as Dr. Stephen Curtiss. He wondered how the two happened to be together.

"I've got to see Kitchell," was Fitzmaurice's abrupt greeting. "Where is he?"

"Came in on the 7:01." Blakeley opened the office door invitingly. "He'll be down in an hour or so. Don't mind waiting, do you?"

Fitzmaurice turned sharply on his heel.

"Can't wait. Have to talk to McAlarney, then. Come on."

He didn't wait for an answer. Along the corridor he strode, leaving the others to follow. And Blakeley somehow did it without question. It occurred to him that Fitzmaurice was probably upset over the news regarding Nina. Come to think of it, it did make rather a fool of him.

McAlarney was taking off his hat and coat when the door opened and the three men entered. He, too, looked twice at the attorney and blinked at Curtiss. Fitzmaurice offered no explanation of the latter's presence—merely introduced him and said they both wished to see Miss Hallowell. Even his manner had changed since the night before. He seemed nervous, and his voice was husky. Not a word was said from the time he asked that Billy be brought in until the door to the inner corridor was opened. The silence was uncomfortable, yet for some reason no one attempted to break it. The in-

spector merely bit off the end of a cigar and lit it. Blakeley went to a window and nonchalantly toyed with the shade cord. The doctor sat on the edge of his chair, hands locking and unlocking. And Fitzmaurice stood, gaze on the door, waiting.

As she came out of the corridor into the dull light of a sunless morning, Billy looked whiter, if possible, and more grotesque than the night before. She had managed to wipe away all trace of tears, and her eyes were tense and smoldering, as if the long night had stirred in their depths the fire of battle. They had a hard, defiant look as they wandered from one to the other of the four men. But when they lighted on Curtiss, their expression changed. The lids drooped, the hardness went out of them, and she went to him swiftly, with a low cry, half sob, on her lips.

In the silence that followed, she clung to the doctor, and he put an arm around her. Fitzmaurice, to whom she had given no sign of recognition, saw the swift grip of her hand on that of Curtiss, the way her eyes filled as he stroked it. Not even a keen psychologist could have read the lawyer's face as he turned away from the two and joined Blakeley at the window. There was about his mouth the same smile, not exactly pleasant, that it had worn the night before when he had dined with the commissioner's secretary. He stood gazing down into the street without a word.

Some fifteen minutes passed. Then the doctor asked to see Jack, and Billy was left once more alone in the camp of the enemy.

Her gaze wavered toward McAlarney. The inspector was busily going over some papers on his desk. Her meeting with Curtiss had apparently not in the least interested him.

Equally indifferent seemed the two men at the window. Blakeley dropped the shade cord, shook down his cuffs, settled his close-fitting coat, and, with

a slight gesture in Fitzmaurice's direction, started for the door.

Fitzmaurice turned. He glanced quietly about the group, then went toward the desk.

"Inspector," he said, "Blakeley and I want a word with you and Miss Hollowell."

Blakeley's eyebrows lifted in polite surprise, but he said nothing. He waited, puzzled, for the other to go on.

Fitzmaurice took from his pocket an important-looking document with a legal seal. Without raising his voice, he spoke sharply and incisively.

"We may as well come straight to the point," he said. "The Loring matter is without a doubt cleared up. So, I take it, our one concern is the innocence or guilt of this young woman. Miss Hollowell is held on a charge of collecting money under Nina Loring's name. Am I right there?"

McAlarney nodded.

"Taking money, I understand, without any idea of giving value received."

Again the inspector agreed.

"Good. Then this will interest you." He laid the document on the desk. "It's an affidavit signed by Mr. Norton Conroy, of Dickson & Company. You can compare the signature with that on the paper you hold."

The inspector picked it up, his eyes traveling rapidly down the page.

"You'll note that Mr. Conroy swears he engaged Miss Hollowell for her services, not her name; that he's willing to pay whatever she asks at any time to secure them; that the two thousand was given to bind a bargain; and that he refuses to press any charge against her."

McAlarney looked up from the sheet in blank amazement.

"When did you get this?" he asked.

"Early this morning. I tried to locate him last night when I left here, but couldn't. He's ready to back up every word of that in person, if neces-

sary. I told you, McAlarney, that you were too hasty in making the arrest."

The inspector's jaw shot forward. He looked like a bull pup ready to spring.

"Too hasty, eh? I don't get you, Mr. Fitzmaurice. This jump to the other side of the fence——"

Fitzmaurice's tone did not change.

"I've been on the other side of the fence straight along."

"I don't get you," the inspector repeated. "But one thing I do get—we don't need Mr. Norton Conroy to press the charge. Another dressmaker called us up this morning and said Miss Hollowell tried to take him in, too. Yes, and he wasn't the only one. We'll get the lot of 'em to testify if we need 'em." He rose and leaned across the desk. "This thing is going through to a finish. The confidence game ain't a pastime. It's a habit New York likes to keep her citizens from cultivating."

"There's been no confidence game."

Blakeley at last found his voice. He had not yet grasped the full import of what the other man was saying.

"As Mac says," he put in, bringing out the words with difficulty, "that man's affidavit does not clear her of assuming another woman's name with design to defraud."

Fitzmaurice turned and looked at him as if suddenly recalling that he was present.

"Oh, Blakeley? That's so—said I wanted a word with the commissioner, didn't I?" He paused, and the calm firmness the other was acquainted with returned. "Well, it was just to inform him that I've taken over Mr. Hollowell's case against him."

Blakeley gave a start.

"I don't understand. Why, only last night——"

"Yes. I wanted to get a line on the thing."

"But you said, after I gave you the

details, that when the chief got back, you'd have news of importance to him."

"This was it."

"Why"—Blakeley looked about bewildered, the smooth veneer of him scratched for an instant—"Fitzmaurice, this is absurd! Absurd, I tell you! You and the chief are such old friends. It's impossible that you can in any way be connected——"

"I think I've made myself clear."

Billy's gaze went up to his.

"You can't—mean it."

"I do. And as your attorney," he went on, "I'd advise you to see the newspaper men at once. It's high time for another extra."

The eyes that held hers sent her a swift message, one of subtle meaning. She groped uncertainly for the key to it.

"No reason why we should allow Miss Loring the monopoly. You have a story of equal interest to the public."

"You mean—you want me to tell them the truth—straight—from beginning to end?"

"Exactly."

A golden light flooded her eyes as if some spark had been kindled by his.

"You know it, then?"

"Yes."

"And you want me to give the papers my brother's story—with my own? Why, yes—of course! Just how the whole thing happened! Things couldn't be any worse for me—and, that way, the public will at least learn facts. Why, yes—the truth, of course!" She kept repeating the words as the fullness of his meaning dawned on her. The fire in her tawny eyes flared, turned on Blakeley. "You see, Mr. Blakeley, you may hold me on a criminal charge—without bail. But it's my privilege to tell the public just how the girl in the Loring case happened to get there."

Blakeley smiled tolerantly. Let her tell it. Let her make a laughing-stock of herself. Fitzmaurice was an enigma.

Likewise, he was resourceful. But this time he had blundered. Any story she told could readily be discredited. Besides which, her play at notoriety seeking now would only count against her in court.

She turned to the inspector.

"I'll see the reporters, please."

Still Blakeley made no move. He would call her bluff, and later the chief himself could talk sense to Fitzmaurice. He had to confess he couldn't fathom the latter's change of front. The fighting brains of Clayton, Fitzmaurice & Bowes couldn't possibly mean that he intended taking up the cudgels for two crooks.

They waited a few minutes while a guard was dispatched for the newspaper men.

"Withhold nothing," Fitzmaurice said to her. "Begin with the accident. Tell just how it happened, and the various interviews with Mr. Blakeley that followed. Influence may be brought to bear to distort what you have to say or suppress it entirely, but I'll make it my business to see——" He mentioned the owner of one of the most fearless and radical sheets in the country, a paper whose editorial pen had, since the last municipal election, been wielded mercilessly against the party in power. "He'll see to it that the interview goes in as it stands. And I've an idea," he remarked casually to Blakeley, "that neither the story in print nor the editorial he'll give it will look particularly good to the commissioner."

There was an odd smile around his mouth, even a friendly one. It said more plainly than words that he meant to make the most of the hornet's nest the newspaper accounts would stir up in the administration.

"It's more than likely to wind up as a case of the People against the City," he ended, as the reporters were admitted.

They swarmed in. Billy steadied the excitement in her voice. The same thrill that had caused her to stake everything on one chance sent her head high. She looked around the group of eager faces. They seemed to form a sea, out of which she picked three women. She fixed her gaze on them.

"I've asked you to hear me," she began, "because I want to give the press the truth—and nothing but the truth. I've waited until to-day, hoping it wouldn't be necessary, hoping that I should be free, knowing that what I had done was with neither malicious nor criminal intent, but only an eager, desperate desire to make life possible for some one who was robbed of the chance to fight for himself. I want first of all to go back a bit, to the beginning, in fact. It concerns a man whose name, I know, will amaze you."

But by that time Mr. Waldo Blakeley was out of the room, making for the nearest telephone.

She gave the whole story in a low voice, without any play at dramatics, without any effort toward effect. It required none. Absolute silence hung over the room, the silence of intense interest.

"I opened the door," she was saying as she approached the crux, "and saw the gleam of a pistol——"

At that point, the inspector, who had listened intently, was called out. When he returned, his hand was raised authoritatively. There was a general air of relief about him.

"I wouldn't go any further with that, Miss Hallowell," he said. "Won't be of interest now. You're discharged."

CHAPTER XVI.

Dr. Curtiss stood at the curb talking with Miss Billy Hallowell, while a man with odd-set eyes was laughingly trying to keep his big ulster from slipping off her shoulders. She was hardly dressed

for the sidewalk on a snowy winter morning. Little flurries whirled around her, powdering her hair as it blew in thick, waving red strands across her face. Dr. Curtiss was explaining Fitzmaurice's wild-goose chase after him the night before.

"He phoned me first at Roosevelt, but I'd left. Then he concluded, rightly, that I might be at the hotel. But he missed me there, too. You see, child, they told me you had gone away, but were conservative about any further information. Of course, being just an old fossil, I hadn't bought an evening paper, so thought you'd probably gone home to Jack like a sensible girl. And it was late, so I decided I'd better wait to see you until the morning. When I got home, I found this gentleman waiting for me. He wanted to get the whole truth from me. He'd been waiting to take me to you. Billy, he thought you and I——" He brushed a hand across his eyes. "It was only after we'd had a long talk and I'd given him facts that he knew I was just your old medicine man."

He got into Fitzmaurice's car, which had been sent down heaped with pillows and blankets for Jack, squeezed in beside Fifi and Madame Berger, whose hands were folded over her ample expanse, and waved out of the window.

"Run along, children," he laughed, "and play. You deserve it."

Billy looked up at the man who was holding his ulster about her shoulders, a curious expression in her eyes. He hooked his hand under her elbow and helped her into the waiting taxi. The door slammed. What is there about the slam of a cab door that gives a sense of intimacy, of being shut off from the world?

She sank into a corner, her eyes, wide and glowing, still on him. He slipped an arm about her.

"Of course you know I love you," he said.

She closed her eyes dizzily an instant—then drew away.

"No—no. It's—it's foolish—and— and reckless. Why—you scarcely know me."

"I know you well enough to want you."

"Can't you see—it's just the adventure?"

"I've had other adventures."

"Have you?" She turned on him jealously.

"Yes. And I've never wanted to marry them."

Her breath caught. She swayed against his shoulder.

"I thought you were my enemy."

"And I thought you loved Curtiss."

They looked at each other and laughed. Next to money, misunderstanding is the root of all evil. Two people, each struggling to read the other's thoughts and motives in terms of his own, stumble neck-deep into the mire of dilemma.

"How did you find out who I was?" she asked.

"From Blakeley—at dinner last night. I quizzed him—let him think I wanted your story through interest in the commissioner. And before I got through—he looked down at her and grinned—"I decided that, as a swindler, you were an awful little flivver."

"Isn't it queer?" she mused. "If life hadn't brought me misery, it wouldn't have brought me you."

"Then I've come to stay?"

"As the wisest enemy I've ever had."

He laughed boyishly and turned her face to the light.

"Say when," he urged. And, as she did not answer, "Why are you hesitating, dear?"

"I've Jack to look after."

"From now on, I shoulder Jack."

"But don't you see? He's a responsibility I *want* to shoulder."

"And how do you propose to do it?"

"I want to go through with that Dickson contract."

He looked steadily into her eyes for a moment.

"Right!" he said. "I expected you would. Do the work for Conroy. But don't expect me to wait for you all that time. I love you."

"But we've known each other only——"

"I've known you—been looking for you—ever since I was a cell."

She shuddered.

"Don't speak of cells!"

He held her close, bent his lips to hers.

"Say when!"

"You say."

"To-morrow."

The boom of a clock struck noon.

"It's twelve," he whispered. "Let's call it a. m. That makes to-morrow begin to-day."

She gave him her lips. A good thing the windows were frost-coated!





ILLUSTRATED BY H. F. NONNAMAKER

Who was the woman with Parker when he shot Rawlingson? The district attorney finds out.

ALAN FRASER, the district attorney, turned steel-blue eyes on the man before him.

"Remember," he warned, "this interview is of your own seeking. Whatever you say will be used against you."

Karin Parker nodded.

"I know. I know. All I'm asking is that you stop your efforts to find out who was with me when Rawlingson was killed."

"Why?"

"Because she can only testify that I shot Rawlingson in self-defense."

A soft laugh came from the district attorney.

"Why don't you have her testify in your behalf, then?"

"Merely a matter of code," responded Karin Parker. "We all have some sort of standard of what we call our honor. Mine happens to be that, if a woman intrusts me with her reputation, I must guard it, no matter what the cost."

"You're lying," said the district attorney. "A man who would steal a woman's honor wouldn't hesitate to betray it also. I'll find the woman who was dining with you, and when I do, I'll have the necessary testimony to convict you

of murder. You're a blackguard, Parker. I've always known you for one. You're the type of polished leper that this city can do without. You and Rawlingson were sworn enemies. You shot him in cold blood. I don't believe you even knew he was armed. When I find the fool woman who saw it all—you'll hang and you know it!"

"And I repeat," said Parker coldly, "that if you find her and force her on the witness stand, you'll lose your case and ruin an innocent woman."

"Innocent?"

"Yes. To you it doesn't seem possible, does it? Your fatuous philosophy doesn't comprehend that occasional indiscretions may be committed by women who have nothing more in view than a lark with some one who represents a passing fascination. And it's just because there are so many in the world with your viewpoint that I ask you to drop the investigation."

"More lies," sneered the prosecutor.

"If she were a good woman, she wouldn't have been a companion of yours, or protect you by her silence after murder had been committed."

"I've told you the truth," the other

said simply. "She was and is a good woman. It may not be a regard for her own reputation she has in mind, but she must treasure her husband's regard, and his name and reputation as well."

"She should have thought of that earlier," snapped the district attorney.

It was the prosecutor's turn to show astonishment and curiosity.

"If you propose to acknowledge your guilt," he responded, "of course that would end matters. There'd be no need of the witness. But aren't you indulging in cheap heroics? Do you expect



She stopped uncertainly,
her eyes searching his
averted face.

to win clemency by a play
for my sympathy?"

Parker's eyes narrowed to pin points. "Fraser," he said slowly, "I can see now that I made a big mistake in shooting Rawlins. In some respects, he was quite a gentleman. Bring in your stenographer and witnesses, and I'll sign anything you say."

Parker's sentence to the penitentiary was used as a text in several of the churches and all of the Sunday newspapers for discourses on the inevitability of punishment for the criminal. The

"Every influence possessed by this office will be used to learn her identity and compel her to testify in open court. Have you anything further to say?"

"Merely this—if I change my plea to 'guilty,' will that end the investigation?"

press pointed out that the district attorney had skillfully saved the State the expense of a long trial.

Alan Fraser, basking in the consciousness of a duty well performed, looked up the following morning to find Dan Kennedy, captain of detectives, at his desk. The officer went straight to the point.

"We caught a stick-up artist red-handed last night. Among the stuff we found in his room was a blue-enamelled brooch with an initial M in diamond chips. If he's telling the truth, he found that brooch in the private dining room of the Maison d'Opera where Parker shot Rawlinsong. This man was a waiter there at the time. He says that the brooch was not in the room before it was occupied by Parker and his companion, but it was by the table on the floor when he went to clean up afterward. So it looks as if this was a pretty definite clew as to the identity of the woman. It's an odd brooch, and we ought to be able to run it down, if you think it's worth while." He laid the pin before Fraser.

The district attorney picked it up and fingered it absently. He was silent a while.

"I wonder," he muttered, "if he's telling the truth. I accused Parker of lying—why not this man?"

Kennedy shrugged.

"I don't know about Parker. He seemed sort of white in some respects, though he *did* chase. But this fellow we've got downstairs is undoubtedly telling the truth, for we've verified every other thing he told us and he would have no reason for lying about this. Find the owner of that brooch, and you have the woman who was with Parker when the killing was done."

Fraser sighed wearily, as a strong man does who begins to doubt the soundness of his faith.

"Well," he concluded, "the case is closed. Parker confessed and there's no need of hearing the woman's story. If you don't mind, I'd like to keep this brooch a while. We may want to investigate later."

When Kennedy had closed the door, the district attorney wheeled around to the open window and sat looking out at the summer clouds. The telephone bell rang, but he did not answer. Knocks at the door brought no response.

It was later than usual when he closed his desk for the day and mechanically donned his hat and gloves. At the door, he paused and then returned to his desk to extract from a drawer the blue brooch and slip it into his pocket.

Once inside his own hallway, Fraser brought out the pin and slipped it under the rug at his feet. Then he stood upon it until he heard it crunch under his weight. He extracted the fragments and walked slowly into the dining room, where young and pretty Mrs. Madeline Fraser awaited him.

"Norah is getting careless," he said. "I just now stepped on your brooch. It was under the hall carpet. You must have dropped it, and Nora swept it under. Now it's badly broken. If you like, I'll take it to the jeweler's and see if it can be repaired."

Mrs. Fraser's low cry sounded a bit hysterical. She came sweeping impulsively forward to bestow the customary evening kiss, but just at that moment he had turned aside to pick up some mail lying on the table, and she stopped uncertainly, her eyes searching his averted face.





LITTLE FOR LITTLE

by
**MARGARET
BUSBEE
SHIPP**



Author of "The Builders," "Mrs.
Garrison Surrenders," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

"Some women in marrying demand all and give all: with good men they are the happy; with base men they are the broken-hearted. Some demand everything and give little: with weak men they are tyrants; with strong men they are the divorced. Some demand little and give all: with congenial souls they are already in heaven; with uncongenial they are soon in their graves. Some give little and demand little: they are the heartless, and they bring neither the joy of life nor the peace of death."—James Lane Allen.

BABETTE studied her face in the mirror with relief. It was impossible to tell whether or not she was painted—the effect most to be desired. She had decided that it was more flattering to a man to put on a little paint, but she had dabbed on a shade too much, and it had spoiled her type, for her lips were fresh and sweet and her eyes big and blue and as guileless as her baby's. So she had wiped off her cheeks, rubbed them with ice, and chanced to achieve a wholly satisfactory result. She could depend on her natural gayety to make her color deepen as soon as she became excited. As she had told Parran over the telephone, she was "perfectly thrilled to be going out to dinner," for the very first time since the baby's advent.

She particularly wanted David Parran to see her looking pretty and girlish, for she tingled with mortification every time she thought of the way she must have appeared the day before. Fanny Drake had brought him in unannounced and found her bathing the baby in the sitting room! The nurse had brought the tub there, as the least

crowded spot in the tiny bungalow. The baby, adorable and gurgling, was making small splashes in her bath, and Babette, laughing and disheveled, was wearing a faded pink negligee, when Fanny walked in without even ringing the bell. Babette hoped that Dave wouldn't remember how reverentially he used to kiss her hand, when she had to extend it to him still damp with castile suds. One could marry but one man, alas! And half the fun of discarded lovers was that they should remember with pangs of regret. Probably Dave thought she had gone off terribly in her looks and was glad she had married Jim Foster. Dave had been dear; he had seemed fascinated with her small ladyship and actually had tried to hold her, but Babette felt as if he would think of her as drowned in domesticity and submerged in motherhood.

It was comforting when he had telephoned to ask if they couldn't "play together," as he chanced to have an afternoon off from his duties as instructor of aviation at North Island. She had joyously assented, thanking her

lucky stars that the baby was bottle fed and the nurse a treasure so that at last she could have a little fun.

Captain Foster had been sent to France just two weeks after his little daughter was born, but his aunt had stayed faithfully with Babette through those difficult days. It was she who had insisted that the mother and baby should

go to Coronado Beach and occupy her summer cottage there, while she remained in Los Angeles long enough to pack up their belongings and close their apartment. But Aunt Henrietta had such old-fashioned ideas about the way a girl should conduct herself while her husband was in France that Babette felt it was rather fortunate that she was away. It was the girl's first opportunity to wear her new clothes—a chic, but demure, little frock, and the very sauciest, most audacious, most intriguing hat!



Babette felt as if he would think of her as drowned in domesticity and submerged in motherhood.

She was ready a few minutes before the hour Parran had mentioned, for while a man might be patient about waiting for a girl, a married woman had better not run the risk of putting him in a bad temper at the beginning.

Picking up the afternoon paper, she glanced at the comforting big headlines, and turned to the casualty list. In the list of officers severely wounded, a name seemed to leap out and strike at her: "Captain James R. Foster, Los Angeles, Cal."

The room whirled around her. She felt dizzy, nauseated. It *couldn't* be true! Why, Jim had told her not to worry a moment, that the Boches couldn't make a bullet that would hit him. Just when she was so happy! Mechanically she took off her hat. It was almost as if Jim, with his jealousy where Dave was concerned, had managed to get wounded in the very nick of time to prevent her from going out with him. Only a few minutes ago, she had had a beautiful afternoon and evening ahead of her, and now everything was dreadful again. If she only hadn't picked up that paper!

Suddenly an idea came to her. She would play to herself that she hadn't read it yet! There would be plenty of time to read it afterward, to shut herself up with Aunt Henrietta and worry over poor, darling Jim from morning until night. If she could help him one single atom, she would gladly give up anything; but it would not help him, it would merely hurt her. If she had to be anxious for weeks ahead, she felt sure she could be braver if she had one little innocent lark to look back upon. She was an Eastern girl, and she knew nobody at Coronado except Fanny Drake. Besides, it would be horrid to disappoint Dave, who worked so hard and who really needed to "play."

She pinned on her hat again. It really was the most becoming hat she had ever had. And there couldn't be

any doubt that some of the paint had adhered, for though she was so wretched over Jim that she must be white as a ghost actually, her cheeks had stayed that soft shell pink. She heard Parran's step and opened the door for him.

"Babette?"

His greeting seemed to hold an interrogation. Then a look of relief and tenderness swept over his face.

"All ready?" he asked with a perceptible effort. "Then come along and make me forget all my troubles."

"I'll try," she replied obediently, as he helped her into the car. "What can possibly bother you, Dave?"

"Well, there are always a few youngsters just arrived from the ground school who think they could have taught Lufbery a trick or two worth knowing. The most delicate job of an instructor in aviation is to take out the conceit and leave the self-confidence. Then there are the gentle ladies, young and old, who insist upon knowing how one 'feels' when he flies. A chauffeur doesn't have to explain how he feels when he drives his car, but the women seem to think there are a lot of highly specialized, tremendously poetical sensations which belong to an aviator every time he gets into his ship. A romantic girl actually asked me how I felt as I 'flew to greet the noonday sun!' 'Hungry,' I told her. 'Doesn't everybody feel hungry around midday?' But you know how that sort of rot bores me."

"Forget the other girls and tell me anything about yourself and your work that you feel like talking about, Dave," coaxed Babette prettily. "I'm enormously proud of you, for I hear you are a marvelous flier. If I were a man, I'd rather be an ace than anything else on earth."

"Or in the sky," he amended. "So had I, Babette. But there are many fliers and few aces, my child."

It was a year and a half since they had seen each other last. Much had happened in those months, and Babette chattered away so fast that she did not notice how silent Parran was. They motored to Point Loma, and as they were passing Sunset Cliffs on their return, Babette exclaimed:

"Isn't it beautiful, with the sea beating against those rocks? Somebody told me that Annette Kellermann staged one of her films there. To swim like that! I believe I'd rather be Annette Kellermann or Joan of Arc than any woman who ever lived."

She looked up in surprise at Dave's burst of laughter.

"You infant! I'm going to take you to the Japanese tea garden and let you feed the goldfish. There's a Jap baby there, all of nine months old, and he may condescend to play with you."

"You forget that I've a daughter of my own," Mrs. Foster retorted.

But when Parran stopped there, she delighted in the dwarfed trees, the quaint bridges, the miniature ponds. The little Japanese mother who toddled in with their tea proudly displayed a tiny Oriental with inscrutable eyes and a mop of dark hair. Babette went into ecstasies over him and insisted upon holding him in her lap and feeding him a bit of her rice cake. Parran watched her, his eyes tender and somber. Soon the few visitors drifted out, and they had the garden to themselves. The baby went to sleep in his hammock, but still they sat there, disregarding the lengthening shadows.

"I wish I could go up in the air with you just once, Davy."

"Do you mean that?"

"Of course, or I shouldn't say it. I never tell stories now. I used to," Babette admitted tranquilly. "Like my name, for instance. It's truly Minnie Victoria, after my two grandmothers. Awful, isn't it? At school I took the part of a maid named Babette in a play,

and I made the girls keep on calling me that. Once I tried to impress a terribly attractive man I'd just met by telling him I was named for an aunt who had married a French count, and, mercy, what a fix I was in! For he'd been educated in Paris, and he wanted to know the count's surname and where he lived, and I couldn't think fast enough to answer, and when I had to confess, he said it was more unusual to be named for a maid than for an aunt, so why fib? So I stopped doing it, for it had always mixed me up. It was hard to remember just what you had said to anybody, and if you always tell the exact truth, why, there's only one thing, and you don't get tangled."

"I see the point," Parran said with amusement. Then, abruptly: "Since you advocate plain truth, just why did you throw me over, Babette? Your note was a bit bald, you know. I've rather wondered about it, and I should like to know—that is, if you don't mind telling me."

She looked up at him with candid eyes in which no lie lurked, and he felt that she spoke the simple truth:

"I don't know exactly. I suppose it was because you weren't particularly jealous of Jim and he was so frantically jealous of you. He was always dogging at me not to go with you and making scenes, and they give me a headache. That last night you and I were together, when we went back to the house, out on the little porch— Maybe you've forgotten, Dave. Maybe you've k-kissed dozens of girls since then."

"I haven't forgotten," he said. "For the first time, I took you in my arms and kissed you."

She nodded, half wistful, half ashamed.

"When I went in, Jim was there. He'd been waiting three hours. You see, I'd broken an engagement with him to go out with you. He heard you call me 'sweetheart,' and he was furious!



"Why, Babette," he said thickly, "I thought of you as the sweetest girl on earth!"

Why, Dave, he was like a movie hero when he gets so mad he breaks down doors with a poker! And he said I had to promise to marry him or he'd never see me again. I promised, just to quiet him, but I didn't mean to get married for a long time. It was silly for a girl to marry who always had engagements ahead, sometimes for two weeks to come. But the next morning, Jimmy brought me a marvelous ring, and he wanted to give a dinner to announce it, and it all seemed lots of fun. He said I must write you and Tom

Blount to tell you I was engaged. He wrote the letter, and I copied it. That's why it sounded so stiff. And then in a month we got married. And I've often wondered whether you thought I was fast and horrid to have let you k——" Her voice trailed away on the word.

"No, I never thought that a moment in my life. But I didn't understand. Thank you for telling me. And you married a better fellow. Jim's all man, and a corking soldier."

"Isn't he splendid?" agreed Babette

enthusiastically. "He's a perfect angel to me, though he's awfully jealous. But I do wish he were an aviator and that he had your nose, Dave. You have the most aristocratic nose in the world."

Parran was silent.

"Did I pronounce that wrong?" asked Babette. "You always say '*aristo*-*cratic*,' don't you? I should stick to two syllables."

A soft little sigh from the Japanese mother made them realize that it was time to go.

At dinner, Babette was her gayest self.

"After one's been keeping house, isn't it fun to go to a big hotel for dinner and have the waiter pounce upon your glass and fill it with ice and hang enthralled upon your order? Then you look after me so nicely, Davy, that I feel quite important."

"Dear little Babette, who wouldn't be 'nice' to you?" he muttered. "If one could really help you any way on earth——"

Later, in the ballroom, he saw a number of his brother officers, but he did not introduce any one to Babette. It was as if he guarded her from being spoken to by any one except himself. To his annoyance, he saw among the onlookers a dear friend of his mother's, and he could not avoid going up to speak to her and introducing Babette. In her turn, Mrs. Willingham introduced Babette to her husband and to her brother, a man of perhaps forty, with gray hair and sunny, bold eyes. He immediately claimed a fox trot.

"I didn't understand your name?" asked Babette when the dance was ended.

"Mayhew. But I shouldn't have to know your name to remember you always as 'the Girl With the Bluest Eyes'."

This was the sort of badinage Babette understood.

"But I couldn't call you 'the Best

Dancer I Ever Danced With' even if I thought of you that way."

He drew her a shade closer for the encore. They danced in such exquisite unison that motion was as exhilarating as flight. Once Babette glanced up at him, and her eyes fell before something in his—at once warm, approving, appraising. But he only said: "Your wise chiffon sleeve doesn't hide the dimple in your shoulder."

She blushed prettily. She wasn't vain, but she did like that dimple.

"It's nice of you to notice such a tiny thing," she murmured.

Parran claimed her when the dance was over, and suggested that they should go outside to seek coolness and the sea. Babette acquiesced in her gentle way, though she preferred dance music to all the songs the sea ever sang.

Outside in the soft darkness, she was conscious of a constraint in Dave's mood, and she tried to soothe and entertain him, but her feet would keep time to the music that floated from the ballroom, and she was secretly thankful when Mayhew found her.

"I've been hunting for you in all the dark corners. I knew this robber baron had borne you off somewhere. You promised to dance with me again, you know," he reminded her gayly.

He bore her off, and Parran leaped back in the shadow of the palms, his thoughts somber and dreary. Presently he was startled by hearing a familiar voice which he recognized as Doctor Willingham's. His wife and he had paused, slightly in front of where Parran sat, to watch the searchlight sweep the water.

"I know the type at a glance—recognize it as a physician learns to recognize the various kinds of women. Hers is the complaisant type—feminine, yielding, unresisting. Plenty of them make devoted wives and good mothers. But the man who marries one of them must be on guard. He is the keeper of the

gate. That girl is born quarry, just as Fred is trained hunter."

"It isn't that shallow girl I'm troubling over, or even my brother. I've stopped concerning myself with Fred's endless affairs. It's Dave I'm thinking of," came Mrs. Willingham's amazing answer. "I know Jim Foster, a big, bullying sort of chap who can hold this girl straight when he is with her. It's Dave I'm apprehensive about. He's worth more than the other three put together."

Parran had not dreamed that Babette was the girl under discussion until Mrs. Willingham spoke, and now it was too late to make his presence known.

"If Dave's mother can't influence him, then there's nothing in heredity or environment. She's kept her life rich and full with many interests, she has the most inviting home, and she's given her husband and son the most exquisite companionship. She's like a pearl—luminous and misty. She shines, but it's a soft shining. Of all the woman I've ever known, I think her the most sympathetic and the most spiritual. And for her son to be infatuated with a shallow little flirt like that! It's chilly out here, dear."

They moved away, and as soon as they were out of sight, Dave went to find Babette. He was black with wrath.

What cesspools middle-aged minds were! "Complaisant"—that innocent child! "Infatuated"—because he yearned to protect her in the dark hour drawing inexorably nearer!

Mayhew and Babette were still dancing, with a rhythmic grace that made many eyes follow them.

"The robber baron approaches!" Mayhew whispered. "And you haven't yet promised to dine with me to-morrow evening."

"I'm afraid I can't promise you." She hesitated, as she wished to keep the evening free in case Dave should ask for it.

"Telephone me at the hotel if you change your mind, Lady Blue Eyes. Your eyes aren't blue like sea water—a deep, troubled blue. They're a clear, flowerlike blue, like forget-me-nots: Those lazy musicians play the shortest waltzes! Now I suppose I shall have to resign you to the insistent Parran."

All the way home, Dave tried to tell her, and then choked back into silence. He felt he must break the news to her gently, lest she should hear it abruptly and when alone. His heart was aching with pity for the girl wife upon whose young shoulders the burden of suspense and anxiety was to fall.

"Come in for a wee while, Davy," she coaxed, when they reached her home. "It's not very late. Haven't we had lots of fun?" Her lips quivered as she caught sight of the crumpled newspaper. "I can't bear to be by myself. Please stay with me a little while."

He followed her into the sitting room. Propped against the clock was a telegram. With a sinking heart, he realized that he had waited too long.

Babette tore it open with trembling hands, devoured it, and then her face suffused with a rush of happy color.

"Oh, Dave, that awful thing in the paper was a mistake—I mean almost a mistake! Isn't that perfectly glorious and wonderful?"

She held out the telegram from Jim's aunt:

Official message came to your address here stating that James was wounded severely, followed by telegram two hours later saying that a corrected list classified him as "slightly wounded." Had intended to leave on late train in order to break the news to you, but with the comforting message just received, will finish packing and arrive Thursday. We rejoice together.

HENRIETTA R. FOSTER.

Parran stammered out some words of congratulation, but one fact dominated all the others.

"You *knew*?" he asked mechanically.

"All this evening, you knew? You had seen the paper?"

Babette nodded happily.

"Wasn't it lucky I didn't stay in and mope as I was tempted to do? Why, I took off my hat, and then I knew it wouldn't hurt Jimmy for me to play one evening, and it would just disappoint you, and I should have had hours and hours all by myself, crying and scared to death, all for nothing."

She glanced up, sure of his sympathy, and recoiled at the look of cold horror in his eyes.

"Why, Babbette," he said thickly, "I thought of you as the sweetest girl on earth. That was what drew me to you at first, what held me, what made me feel, since your marriage, that I had lost irrevocably the very tenderest, sweetest thing that could come into my life. I don't mean I let myself go on loving another man's wife. I've fought against it. But I couldn't get you out of my mind"—his words sounded rough and broken—"all your funny little ways, your candor, your softness and gentleness and guilelessness. And when I saw you again that morning, absorbed in your baby, your hair damp and curly and your cheeks flushed, why, I thought it was the prettiest sight I had ever laid my eyes on, and that Jim was the luckiest man on earth, God help him!

"When I came in this afternoon, I meant to tell you right away, for I had just read the paper, and then your innocent, *unaware* look disarmed me and made me long to give you the evening's pleasure on which you'd set your heart. And all the while you knew! 'Severely wounded'—that might mean that Jim's legs were gone. It might mean that he was blind. It might mean that his face was torn away. And you—his wife—you *unpinned your hat* and then thought better of it!"

Babette was angry. She was aroused to anger very rarely, but no man had

ever spoken so harshly to her in her life. Little lines came into her face; it seemed small and common, as it might be some day when her prettiness had faded and there was nothing left to take its place. Her sole impulse was to stab back:

"You were terribly nice to me all evening when you thought Jim was so badly wounded that he might die! And now you know it's nothing but a scratch, you put on airs and scold me! I think you're furious because he isn't hurt worse!"

Parran looked at her in silence—a long, steady look before which her eyes wavered and fell. Without another word, he turned and left her.

Sleep was far from him, and he drove to the beach along which the sea rolled, clean and cool and strengthening. He felt a strange sense of peace. For the first time since love for Babette had possessed him, he knew that it was dead—root, stock, and branch. He felt a queer pity for Jim. He might be jealous and bullying, but he was a brave man and a good officer. He deserved a truer woman. How gay Babette had been at dinner! How blithely her little feet had twinkled through the dance! How easily she had put it from her that the man who loved her might be bloodily hiccuping out his life in a hospital tent!

The moon rose faintly; wraithlike clouds glimmered soft and pearly. What was that his mother's friend had said? A soul like a pearl? Yes, his mother was like that; so were other women, and he was free to search and find. He felt oddly liberated, as if suddenly released from an insidious enchantment. Ever since he had loved Babette, something as impalpable as fog had seemed to lie between his mother and himself. He had known it to be a constraint of his own making, but now it was gone. He felt a swift impatience for to-morrow to come and for

his day's work to begin, as he turned his car to go back. How good life was when one could meet a man's task with a single heart! Poor Jim Foster!

Babette burst into angry tears when the door closed on Dave. He had ruined her lovely evening and spoiled the news about Jim, all by his outrageous temper. This was the thanks she got for trying to make him happy! She had even refused an engagement with a fascinating man for his sake. At the thought of Mayhew, a quick decision came. She called him up on the telephone and was relieved when he answered at once.

"Am I interrupting you?" she quavered.

"Interrupting? I'm all alone in my room, waiting for my Lady Blue Eyes to change her mind. It's the prerogative of pretty women, so she'll be sure to do it."

How easy he made it! How nice he was!

"Then you still want the engagement?"

"I've already arranged for it. I couldn't believe you so heartless and indiscriminating as to throw me over for that young bear cub. There's a good lay in San Diego to-morrow eve-



As she put on her pink batiste nightgown, the mirror solved her problem.

ning. I saw it in New York, and it's the original cast. Will you choose a frock to wear with the flowers I've ordered for you—forget-me-nots and 'sweetheart' roses?"

His voice made her feel as she did when she went swimming in the bay—as if enveloped in something warm and caressing.

"It'll be lovely to have flowers again and not feel as if they'd come out of the family funds," she said happily. "Every time Jim buys flowers, I feel as if I'd lost two perfectly good pairs of silk stockings."

He laughed back: "We'll have dinner and the theater and a bite somewhere, and then we can have a short spin into the moonlight to cool off."

"There isn't any moon until terribly late," she demurred.

"All the better." His voice came teasingly. "Then if I'm tempted to discover whether your cheek is really made of rose petals, there won't be any jealous man in the moon to see."

"Oh, you mustn't talk that way, you truly mustn't!" She was genuinely agitated at his daring. "You forget that I'm married."

"Does that make your eyes less blue or straighten out one little curl of your hair? But I'll promise to be discreet—unless you wear that intriguing hat again. That might tempt me beyond my powers of resistance."

Babette was dismayed.

"But my other hat is hideously unbecoming. Jim's aunt selected it for me, and I hate it, and you'd hate it. It would ruin the evening to wear it. But if you talk that way about—about what

you said—then I can't possibly wear the other one."

"I'll call at seven," he returned. "In the meantime, I shall be wondering every waking moment whether you will choose to wear aunt's hat, to keep me from even wishing to be indiscreet, or our hat, so as to teach me self-control. At this very safe distance, may I kiss your hands to say good night?"

"I—I suppose that's quite proper," she faltered, "like Sir Walter Raleigh and Queen Elizabeth."

"Eminently proper, and, as you suggest, sanctioned by the late dear queen. Good night, then. I'm kissing your soft little hand and only *thinking* about the dimple in your shoulder."

She hung up the receiver, stirred and half frightened. She hadn't known before that older men were like that. How bold he was! What should she do about her hat? As she put on her pink batiste nightgown, the mirror solved her problem. Why, she could wear her rose chiffon—the forget-me-nots would be sweet with it—arrange her hair the becoming new way, and wear no hat at all!

She slipped into bed and cuddled drowsily against the pillows.

"Darling old Jimmy! I'm so glad he wasn't hurt much!"



SOFTENING GROUND

ONE year I thought my springs were done—

That sudden heats and sudden tears
Had vanished like the rains and sun

Of April; but the years
Show Aprillike inconstancy,

And I forgive anew.
Oh, lover bold, of many loves,
How could I withstand you?

Last year I thought my spring was done,

But—you came back, with kiss and sigh,
And melted. Then your love the sun,

And feeblest snow bank I!

KATHARINE HAVILAND TAYLOR.

WHAT'S *the*
ANSWER?
By Louis Fitzgerald



And one of them died gallantly on the plains
of France. Which do you think it was?

DODIE" WARD'S charming peignoir harmonized well with the soft velour of the davenport, made rosy by the glow of a stately lamp. She lay there curled up like a sensuous kitten. Dodie was manifestly made to be cuddled—a delicately rounded little woman, with alluring curves and soft skin. Her face was intelligent and not without character. One felt that she could rise to any height or sink to any depth—a piece of malleable femininity, ready to be molded by Fate's capricious fingers.

The apartment reflected the luxurious extravagance of Riverside Drive. Over one corner of the baby-grand piano was draped a silk American flag, held in place by an exquisitely carved frame from which looked out the face of a middle-aged man attired in the

uniform of an American officer. The autograph was half hidden by the frame, but still discernible: "Affectionately, Robert."

Dodie mused on how adequately that simple autograph, with its firm, conservative chirography, classified her husband. "Affection"—that was it; affection for a wife to whom love was as the breath of life; affection, a salt for one's coffee instead of sugar!

She moved to the *escritoire* and extracted from a compartment a photograph of another man, also in uniform—a younger man, of somewhat audacious mien. She placed the second photograph opposite the first, so that they seemed to challenge one another. Below the second photograph was written: "Thine, E. S."

Just one word, but what did it not

comprise? No qualifications there, no concessions to convention—hers, body and heart and soul, to do with as she wished. It was the primitive and passionate pledge of sex.

Staring at the two photographs, Dodie Ward tried to picture what would have happened had not the god of war entered to take a hand in the solution of the oldest problem on earth. Whimsically, it occurred to her that in this time-worn triangle, two sides had been removed to France, leaving her as a lonely hypotenuse waiting for Fate to submit the correct answer.

She divined that the *dénouement* would materialize with the casualty lists, and though she knew that a telegram from the war department would apprise her first, anxiety bade her scan each morning and evening the lists given in the newspapers. They became to her the alpha and omega of her existence, the sunrise and sunset of each long-drawn day. Her husband had, of course, instructed that she be notified in the event of his death. She herself had insisted that the other man do likewise. To whom else could it matter as much, pray? For appearance's sake, he had given her husband's name and initials, but her address.

She felt as if she were on some lonely pinnacle at the top of the world, waiting for a vagrant wind to topple her on one side or the other. Poised thus in her mind's eye, she heard faintly the tinkle of the apartment bell and Marie going to answer. There followed a knock at her door, and the maid entered.

"A telegram for madame. It is from the war department. Oh, madame—I hope— *Mon Dieu*, it cannot be that—"

"Leave me, Marie," said her mistress quietly. "It isn't that at all. I wired for some information, and was expecting this reply."

With the brave lie still on her trem-

bling lips, Dodie Ward locked the door and, telegram in hand, groped her way back to the davenport, as if she had been suddenly bereft of sight.

So it had come! The interminable waiting was over. Either she was free to follow where love called, or else the world for her was over, and there remained nothing but the gray ghost of unflavored domesticity. There should never be another affair like this, she promised herself. The sails of her tiny craft once having been spread to the winds of destiny, she would drop anchor in whichever port they carried her, nor regret the harbor.

Holding the envelope face downward, so as not to see the manner of the address, she ripped at the yellow paper and unfolded the telegram. The crisp message leaped out at her. He had died gallantly in the defense of his country.

For many minutes she sat there, a statue in bas-relief against the velour of the lounge. Then she rose slowly and went to the two photographs. One she picked up with intent regard and kissed it gently, as one kisses the pallid brow of the departed. It came upon her that the sacrificial blood spilled upon the popped plains of France would cry to her forever in remembrance.

She knew then that she was bound by ties stronger than were ever uttered by priest or judge. A violent trembling possessed her.

Marie entered at her call, a filmy night robe on one arm.

"The telegram," inquired the maid respectfully, "it was what madame wanted?"

"What I wanted?" Dodie Ward regarded Marie strangely for a moment. Her face went suddenly white. "Does a woman ever know what she wants, Marie?" she cried pitifully. "As God is my judge, I am wholly miserable!"

And she gave way to violent sobs.

ADrift



64

Marion Short

Author of "Hallie Nobody," "Purple and Gold," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

Margaret Lloyd's life had been shipwrecked even before the *Sparta* went down. But in those terrible hours adrift, life began anew.

THE girl swayed in helpless obedience to the motion of the rough waters in which she found herself. Upborne by her life belt, she could distinguish the misty lights of the cruiser that only a few minutes before had inadvertently rammed and sunk the coastwise steamer on which she had been a passenger.

Adrift! It did not seem such a strange experience, after all, but only a sort of physical manifestation of her mental plight for the past few months—months during which she had been unable to detect even a gleam of light in the darkness of her misery.

What had become of all her fellow passengers, she wondered. With the danger of submarine attack a thing of the past, who could have anticipated disaster hurling headlong upon them through the fog?

Only a strangely silent, scurrying few—she among them—had managed to reach a lifeboat of the *Sparta*, and before it could be lowered from its davits, the doomed steamer had lurched for her final plunge, and they had all been tilted into the sea like so many spilled eggs.

Again she felt the strange confusion of arms and legs and bodies striking against her as she fell; again the sense

of overpowering solitude that had followed. How dreadful so much water seemed! This had been her first thought as the sea had engulfed her. So this was the end—to drown! Somehow there was little of terror in the thought, only a great wonder that she, Margaret Lloyd, conscious of such full and abundant life even when life itself seemed hardly worth the struggle, was to die.

Then, suddenly, the shimmer of lights upon water; her weighted lungs making effort for air and more air; a cold that smote her face stingingly; and the realization that her life belt had brought her to the surface again.

And now little murmurs, almost caressing, the ripples made as they washed over her, tagging her like playful children. The searchlights of the cruiser, growing plainer yet through the clearing fog, swept toward her, encompassing her in a broad belt of light. In that light, she saw distinctly several floating, bobbing bodies; she saw the raised hand of a woman clutch frantically in the air as if imploring aid; she saw a little, white-robed child, which seemed still in sleep as it was carried past.

Nothing remained long in sight except the lights, shifting diligently here

and there in search of survivors, the never-resting fling of the waves, and the troubled face of the sky.

What would her husband say if he knew? At the thought of him, Margaret Lloyd's sense of desolation deepened. It was he who had decreed the parting of their ways and had insisted upon her return to her people on the Carolina coast. It was he who had booked her passage on the *Sparta*, to make sure of her departure. She knew it would not mean calamity to him even if her body were found crushed and lifeless, if found at all.

Only a few hours before, they had dined together at a Broadway restaurant, Lloyd glibly filling in the conversational gaps her silence caused, trying to soften, by a great show of courtesy, the fact that he was deliberately riding himself of her forever.

"I've no fault to find with you, Margaret. I want you always to remember that." She could still see his polished blond pompadour, his high-colored face, and his nervous hands fumbling with the menu card. "I want you always to remember, too, that I have the very highest—er—regard and—er—respect for you. I'm not to blame if it's only friendship I feel for you now instead of love, am I?" Then, hastily, as she did not reply: "Of course I'm not. Love either is or it isn't, and that's all there is to it, eh? Er—do have some of this steak with mushrooms, Margaret. There's nothing to equal a steak with mushrooms for a nice, safe dinner at a restaurant, is there?"

And she had made a conventional reply, had hidden her heartache behind stiffly smiling lips, had somehow lived through the hour of torture without flinching.

As they had stepped from the taxi onto the pier, Jack Lloyd's cocksure blandness had left him for a moment.

"You've been a good pal, Margaret,

there's no mistake," and his drawn brows had shadowed slightly the gleam of his bright blue eyes. "I—I wonder if I'll miss you after you've been away from me a month or two, and call myself a fool for letting you go."

There had been no bitterness in her reply. She had a calm nature, loyal, trusting, and above all truthful.

"No, you'll not miss me much—the real me, I mean. Of course, you've grown accustomed to lots of little homely things I've always done for you—like your mending and seeing to your laundry and fixing the special dishes you're fond of—but you'll soon get used to doing without all that. It may upset you a little for a day or two, but that's all."

A Swedish bride and groom had come into view just then, bound for their honeymoon journey on the *Sparta*, their shining, happy faces and their garish new attire, as they marched stiffly and self-consciously side by side, proclaiming their status as a newly married couple as unmistakably as if it had been shouted aloud.

Something in the sight of their guileless, almost ludicrous, happiness had caused Margaret suddenly to lose her self-control, and a gush of tears had rained down her cheeks.

"For Heaven's sake, don't cry!" and Jack Lloyd, hating a "scene" always, had recoiled from her.

"I didn't mean to break down, Jack," choking back a sob and drying her eyes, "and I won't again. Seeing that funny couple—somehow so sure of themselves and their future—just—sort of reminded me that this isn't exactly the way I had expected to return to my home when I left it—with the rice and old shoes thrown after us and all that. Tell me—is it any fault of mine—don't spare me—this wreck of everything worth while? Is there any way in which I could have been different that would have changed things?"

"No, I don't think so," one blond eyebrow rising in critical consideration of her query. "But if it was anything," thrusting both hands into his pockets and swinging one shoulder toward her, "it was—— Oh, hang it all! I don't like to say it. But perhaps it was because you didn't have enough pep—the sort of thing that makes a fellow's friends stand around and admire you—the sort of thing that keeps a fellow guessing himself. You're a sweet, brown-eyed little thing, but—somehow—too openly fond of a fellow, with your cards always face upward on the table, and——

"But what's the use of trying to figure it out? We've gone over it all a dozen times and never got anywhere in the end. You'll soon forget all about me when you get home, after you get those divorce proceedings started. Desertion, you know, is the charge. I slipped the full directions in your writing case, so you won't forget anything. You'll soon be running around with your old friends and be invited everywhere. No girl in town was more popular than you were, you know."

"I'll hardly be in the mood for friends or, popularity, Jack," and again her calm had threatened to desert her.

They had boarded the *Sparta* by this time, and Lloyd had immediately proceeded to locate her stateroom. Further words between them becoming difficult after that, Lloyd had slouched hatless and embarrassed in the doorway. The unexpected appearance of a messenger boy had been welcomed by both. The boy had brought a box of long-stemmed roses with Margaret's name on the card attached.

Margaret's eyes had grown misty as she had lifted the flowers to her breast, caressing them, drinking in their fragrance. They were from Flora Slater, her closest friend, the widow of Lloyd's former partner in business.

"I didn't want to say good-by to

Flora," she had said, "so I didn't tell her I was to sail on the *Sparta*. I wonder how she knew."

"She phoned me, and I told her," Lloyd had explained. Then, hastily: "That's the last signal for going ashore! Well, good luck to you, Margaret! I'm sorry, you know, for everything, but I think it's all for the best—I really do. Er—you might drop me a postal when you reach home—er—if you feel like it—if it's no trouble, I mean. Er—good-by!" And with a fumbling touch of his lips to her cheek, he had left her.

From first to last, that parting scene came back to her now, as she floated alone in the strange welter of wave and darkness.

Something struck harshly against her shoulder and then passed over her, submerging her completely for an instant. Frightened, she gave an involuntary cry. To her relief, as if in answer, came the sound of a human voice.

"Keep your courage, friend. A life-boat should be coming soon."

A man was swimming toward her through the mist and darkness.

"Oh," she cried, "come near me if you can! It isn't so dreadful, if only some one is near!"

As she spoke, the brilliant reach of a searchlight enveloped them, revealing the man's face distinctly. Margaret saw that he was as young, almost, as she, that his hair clung in wet streaks to his temples, and that his forehead was bleeding profusely from a wound.

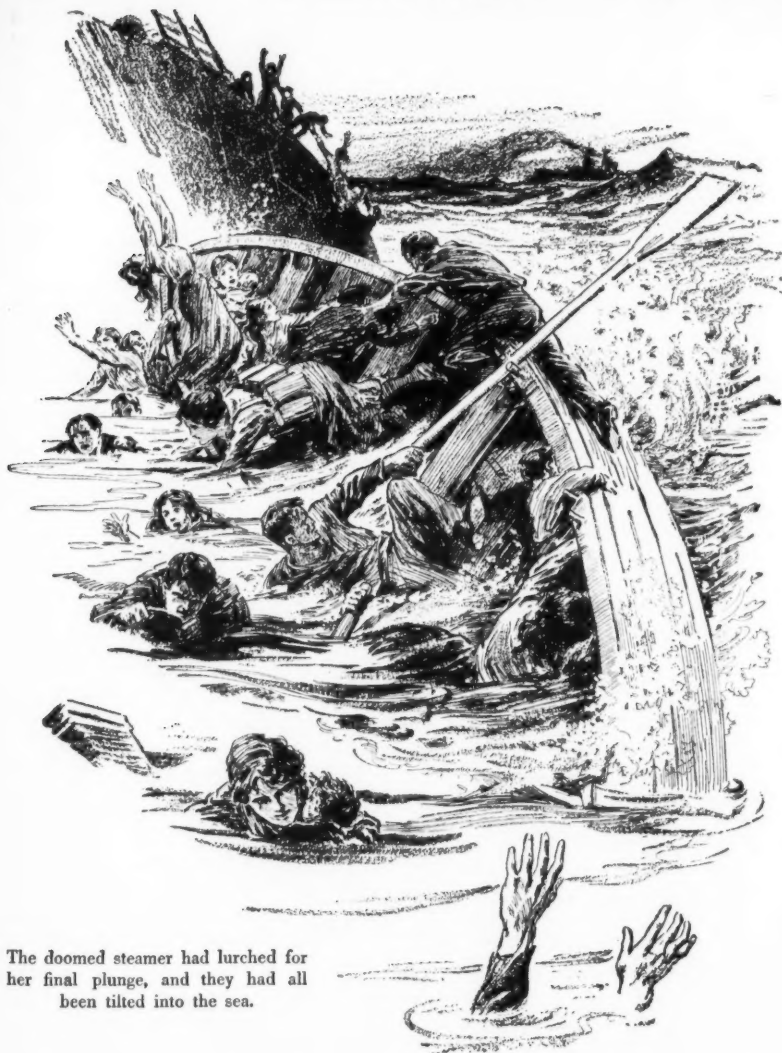
"You've been hurt!" she exclaimed. "Let me help you. Swim closer yet—please—please!"

The man did not seem to hear her, for he swam straight on past her without stopping.

"Where are you?" he called, as he circled gropingly about.

"Here—here! Come closer!" she cried again.

"I can't seem to find you," he answered. "It's all—so—so—dark!"



The doomed steamer had lurched for her final plunge, and they had all been tilted into the sea.

Margaret swam to meet him, then, and he was well-nigh exhausted when she reached out and grasped him by the hand.

"Why, you haven't any life belt!" she gasped, horrified at the discovery.

"No," he panted in reply. "I put mine on a kiddie, and there was no time to snatch another. I think, though, I can hold out."

"Of course you can, and will!" Margaret encouraged him. "They must

be picking up survivors by this time, and the light falls full upon us now."

"Light?" the man exclaimed in wonder. "My God! Can you see light?"

"Of course—all about us," she replied, perplexed. "Can't you?"

"No! I can see nothing—nothing! There's only total darkness."

As he turned his face squarely toward her again, a sickening thrill ran through Margaret. His wide-open, eyes were staring blindly, unblinkingly, straight into the glare. Quickly she thrust one arm out under his head.

"Rest against my shoulder—cling to me—until help comes. I'm strong, uninjured, and my life belt holds me up."

"Thank you," he said, accepting her aid. "That helps, if it isn't too much for you. There's a nasty hole in my forehead. A floating hatch struck against my head—that's how it happened."

Again darkness swept the surface of the sea; the searchlights were playing on the other side of the cruiser, its hull looming up in outline against their silver gleam.

"Do you still see—the lights?" asked the man, with sudden, painful alertness.

"Yes," answered Margaret, reluctantly, "I can still see them, though they're turned away from us now."

The stranger began to laugh broadly.

"If I've lived through hell with the boys in Flanders, only to become blinded—useless—here at home just when I'm needed most, it would be better if a shell had got me and ended it all—over there!"

He made as if to swim away from her, but Margaret held fast to him with all her strength.

"If you leave me, you'll drown!"

"I'll take my chances on drowning, little woman—whoever you are. My strength is going, and it isn't fair to drag you down, too."

"There's no danger of that. I'm un-

hurt—but you—you're suffering! Once they've rescued us, you'll soon be all right—I know you will. But now—Oh, if you won't let me help you this way, then we must manage somehow for you to put on my life belt!"

"Your life belt! No! Only a coward would save himself at a woman's expense. And why should you hold your own life of less value than another's?"

Margaret had not once relaxed her hold on him, and now he sank back upon her arm again from sheer exhaustion.

"Because," was her simple reply, "I am only a woman who has lost out, anyhow. I was married but a short while since, yet my husband grew tired of me—was sending me back to my folks—forever—when he put me aboard the *Sparta* to-night. Not that I wouldn't fight to keep afloat to the very last minute, at that," she added, with a sort of grim humor, "for, in spite of everything, I know I should."

Speech between them became broken, fragmentary, after that, the terrific strain of the man's struggle for mere existence telling on them both. But much can be said in brief in the shadow of threatened death.

The stranger, Margaret learned, was a surgical expert who had seen service in France and Belgium, and who had returned to take his place on the staff of a special restoration hospital for badly maimed and crippled soldiers.

"What big, splendid work for others you've been doing—are still to do!" she exclaimed admiringly. "How small it makes me seem to myself! And to think how—in a world of suffering—I've been clinging to my own little personal happiness! As if that mattered! How unspeakably selfish I've been!"

"You selfish!" the man scoffed gently. "You—with your kind arm upholding me!"

"We're comrades in danger. How could I do less?"

Margaret marveled, as she spoke, at the sense of spiritual kinship that had somehow established itself between them. Already their acquaintance seemed old, not new.

It was with alarm that, presently, she felt him sink more heavily against her shoulder. It meant that he was growing weaker still. And as yet no hint of rescue!

"Try—try to keep up—to help yourself—just a little!" she begged. "Oh, you must!"

"I will try," he murmured in answer, "but even if my life goes out a torch—your kindness, your friendship—at the last!"

Suddenly the lights changed, shifting once more to the area about them. Clearly Margaret saw again the man's wide-open eyes—those eyes that could not see! He looked so boyish, so utterly helpless, as she gazed at him, that something deep and maternal woke to life within her.

"You poor laddie!" she exclaimed, her voice tremulous and tender. "You poor, poor laddie!" She bent her head and kissed him on the cheek.

"Thank you—for that kiss," he breathed faintly. "It seems to me—somehow—it's that kiss—and you—I've been waiting for—always."

Only a hopeful moment the lights remained, then turned away from them again, and to Margaret the darkness that followed seemed endless. Her outstretched arm, which had ached so frightfully at first, began to feel numb, paralyzed, sensationless as wood, and when the never-resting shaft of light again returned, this time with purpose, she realized that the sea had claimed still another victim, that the man who had refused the offer of her life belt had sunk from sight.

The horror of his taking off swept over her like a smothering black wave. A rowboat was fairly upon her before she heard the sound of shouting voices

and saw a sailor extending an oar for her to grasp. The water clung to her with heavy, reluctant fingers as she tried to aid her rescuers, but she felt herself being drawn up, up, and into the boat. Then—darkness.

The soft warmth of enfolding blankets, delicious, merciful drowsiness! To the everyday realm of warmth and comfort, where the sea is not and where there are kind faces and kind voices, Margaret had returned, leaving a region of dim horror somewhere far behind.

Gradually, from her berth in the narrow hull of the cruiser, deep down below the water line, she began to notice the details of her surroundings—that the sailors wore French uniforms and spoke the language of that beloved country and that they must be the crew of the ship that had spelled destruction to the *Sparta*.

Next, as if slowly defining itself from the confusion of a picture on the screen, came the image of a young mother holding in her arms a crowing, laughing child. The woman's wet hair, the blanket wrapped about her and her little one, showed that they, too, had narrowly escaped from drowning, yet now the mother was crooning a lullaby, apparently forgetful of it all!

Like a tragic protest against that incongruous lullaby in the midst of such conditions arose the persistent sound of heart-broken sobs. At first Margaret could not distinguish from whence they came, but at last she saw a woman crouched upon the floor some distance away, rocking back and forth and wringing her hands. Her fair hair was wet and hanging about her shoulders like the other woman's; about her form a blanket had been thrown; and Margaret recognized in her the little Swedish bride of the evening before. She was quite alone now—and Margaret understood!



Margaret had not once relaxed her hold on him and now he sank back upon her arm again from sheer exhaustion.

With that understanding, came full awakening, and the recollection of all that had gone before. She started up wildly.

"The man—the man!" she cried. "Where is he? He was there beside me—so long! Did any one try to save him—did any one try——"

Suddenly her strength failed her and she fell back, wretchedly ill.

Later, when she was somewhat re-

covered, she ascertained from the ship's doctor—who happened to speak very good English—that no one answering to her description of the blinded man had been rescued, but that the cruiser was turning back with the few of the *Sparta's* passengers it had picked up, and that their reception in a New York hospital had already been arranged for by wireless.

Somehow it never occurred to Mar-

garet that the published news of the sinking of the *Sparta* might have the effect of bringing about another meeting between Jack Lloyd and herself. The finality of their farewell precluded that. She did not even dwell in her thoughts upon the strangeness of her return to a city she had hardly expected to see again. For hours after her arrival at the hospital, her mind, rendered keenly alert by the nagging pain and a badly wrenched arm and shoulder, was still filled with vivid and pitiful memories of the man whom she had tried vainly to keep at her side until the rescuers should find him.

"Margaret, my wife!"

Even when she looked up from the little white bed on which she lay and saw her husband bending anxiously above her, he did not seem real to her, she had put him so far out of her thoughts. It was only as if she were entering upon some strange and confusing dream. Dazedly, she questioned him:

"Why—did—you—come?"

"Because I'm a human being, that's why! What did you think I was—a monster?" and he flung himself on his knees beside her. "Margaret," he went on, "thank Heaven you were saved! Why, if your name hadn't been among those rescued, I should always have looked upon myself as your murderer! Aren't you glad I dropped everything to get here? Aren't you glad to see me?"

Her answer was a stifled cry of pain.

"My arm—please—don't touch it!"

"Pardon me, dear," and he drew back. "I'd forgotten about your arm. Oh, it was all in the papers—how you tried to help some one else even when it seemed you might not be rescued yourself. The ship's doctor told it all. You're looked upon as quite a heroine. Maybe I wasn't proud when the reporters hunted me up and wanted your photograph!"

Her bewilderment was unfeigned.

"But why—should you be proud—now—Jack?"

"Because you happen still to be my wife," he replied, with a smile. "I should think you'd guess what it means—my being here. It means I've repented of my folly and am going to take you back home with me as soon as you're able to go."

He paused expectantly, but on Margaret's white face there rested not even the semblance of an answering smile.

"Of course you can't believe it yet," he continued, rather disappointedly, "and I don't blame you. But I tell you, when I thought I'd lost you forever, little girl, it showed me how much I did care for you, after all."

"Did it?" She spoke slowly, looking at him with shadowy, inscrutable eyes. How was it, she pondered, that such words from him—words that once would have meant ineffable happiness—should leave her now completely unmoved? Was it possible that her love for him was gone forever? Had it floated away on a raft of suffering, the night before, along with that other wreckage whose goal was nowhere?

"Don't you grasp what I'm telling you, Margaret? Your eyes look as if your thoughts were a thousand miles away."

"They're not—they're right here." She spoke now in her old frank, practical way. "But it's only sympathy you feel for me, not love, or anything that could last. So, when I'm well, it's better I should just go on back home, exactly as we had planned. And don't worry about its hurting me this time," she added kindly, "for it's different with me now. Out there, face to face with death, I did a lot of thinking, Jack. I remembered how I had clung to you even when I knew you didn't want me to, and I suppose I must have come to my senses and let go of you—at last—for good and all. Yes, I've let go! I

know it now, because I realize that nothing you can say or do would ever have the power to make me very glad or very sorry again. That shows it's all over with me, the same as it has been—so long—with you."

"I don't believe it!" Hurt vanity, profound amazement, convulsed Lloyd's florid face in a manner that was almost grotesque. "You're feverish—not in your right mind! You can't fool me about not caring any more! I know better than that! And you'll know better, too, when you've had time to think it over."

She was too weak to protest, almost to think, and, turning away her head, she wearily closed her eyes.

"Gad, Margaret!" Lloyd exclaimed in astonishment. "I believe I think more of you at this moment than I ever did in my life before—just when you're treating me worst! And how pretty you look! Your face is as pale as a pearl, and your brown hair crinkles out over your pillow like a baby's! You'll think it over and come back to our home and me—I know you will. Eh, Margaret?"

"Well—perhaps—Jack," she said faintly. After all, what else was there for her to do, she reflected, since he asked it. "I—I'll think it over."

Her manner still was baffling, and he regarded her uneasily.

"It isn't as if there had ever been another woman in my life, you know, or anything like that."

A faint smile crossed her lips.

"Are you sure there never has been?"

It was not that she cared now, only sometimes she had doubted it.

"Never! I'll swear it on a stack of Bibles! And you're going to forgive me for everything, aren't you?"

"Forgive?" Her voice was strangely listless. "I suppose so, if it pleases you."

He noticed, suddenly, that her pallor had increased.

"You're all tired out; I've stayed too long. Just one thing more before I go—I wanted to tell you that our furniture, by good luck, was not carted off to the storage rooms, after all, and that when you get back, everything will be just as shipshape as before." He paused with his hand on the doorknob and looked back. "I'll give you until to-morrow to telephone your promise to return to me, and I warn you, if I don't hear from you, I'll travel right up here to get it for myself."

Margaret's sleep was a broken and uneasy one that night, troubled dreams enveloping her senses even when she waked.

Somehow, as she struggled with the problem of her future, it seemed to her that the blinded man was there near her, and that she was imploring him to point out the road that she should follow.

"Is it for Jack's good and mine that I should go back to him when love is gone? Tell me—tell me!"

And though from that dream figure no answer came, the next morning found her with a mind resolved to try to take up the threads of her life with Lloyd at the point where they had been dropped.

A nurse's telephone rested on a small stand by the bed, and when breakfast was over and her arm had received attention, Margaret asked and received permission to use it for an outside call.

Then occurred one of those circumstances which, though trifling in themselves, yet serve to release waves of destiny so huge that former things are swept away, and the sands of a changed existence are left shining in their stead.

The phone operator, in answer to Margaret's call, committed a trifling error—she plugged in on a busy wire.

Jack Lloyd's accents, tender, voluble, reached Margaret, preceded by no salutation whatever, and she almost answered back before she realized that



Such conscience as they both possessed, it seemed, had been stirred by her narrow escape from death, and they had mutually decided to go on in the same old surreptitious way rather than force upon her—Margaret—in the circumstances, the alternative of a divorce.

Those rosy flowers Flora had sent her at the pier! Her tears and gratitude when she had received them! And now—the bitterness of friendship betrayed! Yet she forebore the lightning shaft a single word from her would have launched, and hung up the receiver without having spoken.

But her irrevocable decision to go her own way, and the discovery that had caused it, she put in a letter to her husband which she dispatched within the hour.

he was in the midst of a conversation with somebody else, and that the somebody else was a woman.

"It isn't as if there'd ever been another woman in my life," her husband had said to her. And yet—

It was Flora Slater who was answering Lloyd, in terms as familiar and endearing as his own. How well she knew that voice, with its subtle undertones of sympathy and affection! Had she not made Flora her one and only confidante when her unhappiness had begun? She had never even remotely suspected the existence of a guilty liaison between her friend and her husband, but proof, damning and positive, reached her in the words she was hearing now!

"To-morrow the doctor says you'll be given leave to go," Margaret's nurse informed her a few days later.

They were promenading along a corridor, testing the patient's strength.

As they paused by an open window, Margaret looked out across the cubed and angled sky line of New York toward that Southland she expected soon to reach, and from which she had been turned back in such fateful and tragic fashion.

"I'm happy to be well again—so happy!" she exclaimed.

"I suppose it does make you happy, but recovery can't possibly mean to you what it will to my patient in there," and the good-natured young nurse pointed to the half-open door of a room across the corridor. "He's just been transferred to my care. He had a narrow escape when the *Sparta* went down—was picked up for dead and showed no signs of life until the next morning. They operated for an injury to his brain as soon as he was brought here, and to-day—though his eyes are still bandaged—the sight he'd lost through shock is coming back!"

Gently she pushed the door open.

"May I go in for just a moment?" Margaret whispered gaspingly. "I was on the *Sparta*, too, you know, and—"

"Of course you may go in," interrupted the nurse with a smile, "and talk it all over. Only, be careful not to wake him if he happens to be asleep."

One look at the strong features clearly revealed below the bandaged eyes of the patient almost convinced Margaret that the man she had given up for lost was indeed alive.

Quietly she placed a chair beside the bed and waited until—at last!—he stirred from the deep sleep into which he had fallen.

"How do you feel now, comrade?" Her voice was scarcely audible as it floated toward him.

He started slightly and turned his head.

"Fine," he replied, "but who are you, please?" She noticed that he listened for her reply with tense and breathless interest. "You're not—the nurse?"

"N—nurse Margaret," and a sudden panic of shyness caused her to stammer.

"From the sound of your voice," he said disappointedly, "I thought it might be some one else. Of course"—with a sigh—"when I think it over, I know you couldn't be."

"Was the—somebody else—a woman you knew very well?" she ventured, after a pause.

"Yes, I knew her very well. I think I've known her always—though we met on the night the *Sparta* sank. I could not even tell you her name."

He moved his head uneasily, as if in pain.

"Would you like a glass of water?" Margaret asked, starting up.

After she had given him the water and lowered him to his pillow again, "Don't—don't move, please!" he begged, as she started to take her arm from under his head. "It's quite as if she were keeping me afloat again—that little woman off the *Sparta*! I'd give my right hand—almost—if I could meet and talk with her again!"

Margaret gently lifted the bandage that lay across his eyes.

"If you will take the trouble to look," she said with a tremulous laugh, "perhaps you will find that little woman off the *Sparta*—not very far away!"

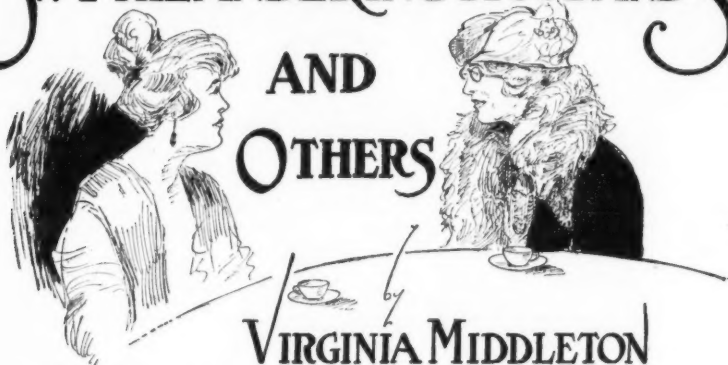
A SONG IN SPRING

WE thought we had forgotten,
We thought we did not care.
The spring shook down the sweetness
Of new buds on the air.

Then spring set meadows greening,
And colored hill and plain,
And we, who walked so coldly,
Were mad to kiss again.

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.

ON PHILANDERING HUSBANDS AND OTHERS



Author of "How Often Can One Love?" "Intimacy and Allure," etc.

Is the philanderer really the most objectionable of all husbands?

THE confirmed spinster came in to tea with a black frown above her shell-rimmed glasses.

"The more I see of husbands," she announced, "the gladder I am that I keep house with a female Neapolitan cook and a blue Skye terrier for companions!"

So saying, she seized a lump of sugar with vindictive tongs and dropped it into her hot tea as if it were a specimen of the viper "husband" being consigned to a fit doom of boiling oil.

"What you mean, of course," suggested a languid lady who wore long jade earrings and two wedding rings, "is that the more you hear from wives, the gladder you are of the simple companionship you mention. It isn't what the innocent female bystander sees of any husband that makes her cling to celibacy. It's what wives reveal about the secrets of the prison house. Now, isn't that true? And whom have you been seeing this afternoon?"

"It's more or less true," agreed the confirmed spinster, somewhat mollified by tea. "And I've been seeing Claire.

I'm guilty of no breach of confidence when I say that her husband's conduct is simply breaking the poor girl's heart."

"You are, indeed, guilty of no breach of confidence," remarked the twice-married lady. "We have all held sessions with Claire. What has Arthur been doing now?"

"He's completely infatuated with the woman who has just moved next door—the black-haired one. He spends all his daylight-saved hours over there, helping her make a formal garden. And he goes over again after dinner with some of his horticultural books to lend her, and doesn't return to his own roof-tree until bedtime. Claire says she was so happy when Arthur first became interested in gardening, because it seemed such an innocent, stay-at-home taste. And now——"

"A congenital philanderer, like Arthur," said the twice-married dame sententiously, "could make a taste for blacking the kitchen stove serve his amatory purposes. He wouldn't use it for a blind. He would merely adapt his

lesser inclination to his greater passion. No one can accuse Arthur of being merely a hollow pretense in his love of gardening. It is sincere. But, good Heaven, so is his love of women—new women! And there you are—or there Claire is. Where's the black-haired one's natural protector and watchdog?"

"Still overseas. Claire says she thinks she could endure it if it hadn't been for the red-haired girl who was studying music and staying at the Greene's—Mrs. Greene's niece. You know Arthur rushed her almost all the winter. And then he seemed to tire of her, and came back home, and began to plan his garden, and made love prettily to Claire herself, and everything was *coeur de rose*, and she thought they were going to be Darby and Joan to the end of the chapter. And, instead, along comes this siren. Claire is desperate. She says she's going to leave him. She asked my advice. I didn't know what to tell her. It's such a serious matter."

"It isn't as serious as you think. Claire wouldn't take it if you happened to advise her against her own wish."

"What would you have advised?" asked Claire's most recent confidante.

"What should I have advised? I should have spoken thus to her. I should have said, 'Claire, my dear, don't be a goose! You knew that Arthur was a philandering youth when you married him. You were extremely pleased with yourself because you were able to outdistance all competitors and win him for your own. If I recall rightly, you and he eloped. It was a wise step, because his constancy probably could not have stood the strain of an engagement and of long-drawn-out wedding preparations. But the elopement didn't work a miracle. It left him precisely the same man that he had been. Why marry a youthful philanderer and then grumble because you haven't auld Robin Grey for a husband?' That is what I should say."

"I think you'd be heartless."

"No, it wouldn't be heartlessness. It would only be common sense. I must be allowed to know a little bit about men and husbands. I have three brothers, all married, and three sisters, all married. I myself have been happily married twice. I claim to be a sort of specialist in marriage. And I know that the philanderer is no worse than any other sort of husband, and that he's a lot better than some, than a great many."

"Suppose Claire divorces Arthur, what then? She's likely to marry another man, isn't she? Well, what kinds of husbands are there to choose? In the first place, she'd be very likely to choose another philanderer. Why? Because she has already shown that her taste runs in that direction, and it'll probably keep on running in that direction. And that would mean the whole thing over again."

"A burnt child——"

"Nonsense! A burnt child thinks that the next fire he encounters is merely going to be a bright, warm thing that will delight his eye and comfort his heart! So with women whose fancy bends toward cheerful, agreeable, light-minded, light-hearted men. She'll marry another philanderer, Claire will, if she divorces Arthur, and there'll be the whole thing over again."

"Or suppose she doesn't. Suppose she is really afraid of fire after this burning—what other kind of husband is there for her to marry? There is the grouch. A philanderer is almost never a grouch. The grouch always makes trouble about the bills. He never wants to go to dances or dinners or the theater or the opera. He's a social dyspeptic. It's as difficult to provide him with relaxation which he will take and enjoy as it is to provide one of those queer nutarians or fruitarians with a physical diet to suit them. And not only that—he's just as averse to

his wife's having the sort of good time she likes as the food crank is averse to his family's eating what pleases their palates and agrees with their digestions. Claire would admit, before a honeymoon with a grouch was over, that Arthur, the philanderer, was a thousand times more desirable as a husband than the social dyspeptic.

"Suppose she married a jealous man. She'd learn something about discomfort then! A really jealous man is a madman, and all jealousy approaches in its degree to madness. She'd find that she couldn't speak civilly to the grocer's boy, that she couldn't smile amiably to the paying teller on the other side of the bank screen, that she couldn't express an admiration of any actor, that she couldn't listen with an appearance of intelligent interest to the conversation of any professor next whom she might be seated at dinner, that she couldn't dance twice in one season with the same pair of legs, without incurring the suspicion of the jealous husband. She'd have to tell where she had been at three-ten on any given afternoon. She'd have to apologize for having inadvertently dropped in at her mother's at the same time with her sister's fiancé. More than that, she might have to apologize for being at her mother's at all. A jealous husband is almost as resentful of his wife's family ties and affections as of rivals in her love."

"But there aren't so very many really jealous husbands in the world."

"No, perhaps not. But there are millions of naggers. Compared to life with a nagger, life with a philanderer is a bed of roses. The nagger wants to know if you've remembered to send his dinner coat to the tailor's, and whether you've called up the clock mender, and whether you've asked the Browns to dinner, and whether you got over to his mother's to inquire about her rheumatism. And did you send the

wing chair to be upholstered, and if not, why not? Didn't you know that it would take at least ten days, and didn't you want it back before Gertrude's birthday party? And why did you let the children have that green candy? Didn't you ever read that all manufactured green candy was colored with coal tar or arsenic? Besides, ought the children to have candy between meals? And didn't Emmeline, the waitress, wear singularly squeaky shoes? And couldn't Nora, the cook, be induced to use pepper more sparingly? And had you gargled with bicarbonate since you came in from the meeting? And why, by the way, did you attend that particular meeting? And when were you going to visit Bobbie's school and have a talk with his teacher? I tell you, the nagging husband is the engagement calendar and the conscience both made continuously vocal. Crackling of thorns beneath a pot!"

"You've described an extreme example of the type."

"Every man," said the twice-married woman darkly, "is an extreme example of his type when you're married to him. Arthur doesn't seem to you and me an extreme type of the philanderer, but he does to Claire. And so would the nagger or the jealous husband or the grouchy husband. So would the hypochondriac, if she happened to marry one. 'Claire, where is the thermometer? I think I have a little touch of fever this evening.' 'Claire, would you mind coming over here to the light and looking at my eyes. Do they seem quite right to you?' 'Claire, you will have to call up the Ogdens and say we can't come this evening. I feel that I am in for a sick headache.'"

"Why, I knew a woman once, a perfectly nice woman, and she married a clergyman in an access of mixed emotions—religious and sentimental, you know. Well, that man could never make a sick call without asking if he

might use the patient's or the physician's clinical thermometer! I dare say the bishop did something about it finally, but not before they had been shifted from one parish to another, until finally they landed in the backwoods, where the thermometer was not in general use. That's what it is to be married to a hypochondriac. Do you think that any amount of reliance upon her husband's affection and faithfulness could compensate that poor martyr for all the social agonies she endured when he went off on sick calls? Claire doesn't know what wretchedness is."

"That's mere nonsense, as you are aware yourself," said the spinster firmly. "A mere breach of etiquette isn't the same as a breach of faith. You'll be putting the tendency to wear a handkerchief tucked in the sleeve in the same category with a fondness for chorus girls and cabaret charmers."

"Some of us would really consider it worse," insisted the twice-married lady. "But if that sounds flippant to you, consider really serious things. Claire might have married a failure. God help the woman who does, especially if she continues to love her husband. I don't believe there's anything harder on earth for a loving woman to bear—unless it's the sight of a tiny baby's suffering—than watching her husband's misery and shame when he finds that he doesn't measure up to the requirements of his position in the workaday world. She's so powerless to aid him. She can't even let her tenderness brood over him, for tenderness, to his mortified sense of failure, only means that she's aware of his lack and is trying to 'baby' him. Now a philanderer is seldom a business failure; if he becomes one, he ceases to be a philanderer. Philandering requires a carefree mind. Plain, brutal unfaithfulness, of course, may be undertaken by any one, no matter how much distracted by worry. It may even be

undertaken as a resource from anxiety—like alcohol or drugs. But that's a very different thing from the philandering spirit, which is sport for sport's sake. Philandering is no more possible in the atmosphere of financial gloom in which the failure perforce lives than butterflies are possible in a sodden November rain. If Claire really loves her Arthur, let her rejoice that he is at least not one of the army of men with bent shoulders and eyes upon the ground, forever trying to figure out why they do not advance, why their plans all go agley. Oh, it's awful!"

Some one, remembering that the expert philosopher on married life had a brother bearing the earmarks of the failure, tactfully turned the direction of the talk.

"It seems as if there were two classes of offense of which a man or woman may be guilty in marriage," she observed. "One sort is offense against the wife or the husband in the personal relation. The other is offense against the wife or the husband in the general social or human relation. If a man or a woman is unfaithful, unloving, inconsiderate of the personal passion on which marriage was begun, he or she has been guilty of a peculiar crime—I mean a crime peculiar to the relation. If he or she, however, is merely dishonest or unsuccessful in business, or a hypochondriac, or given to social *faux pas*, or a nagger, or mildly jealous and exacting—why, it isn't a fault peculiar to the relation. Therefore, it isn't a crime against the wife or husband. And philandering, flirtation, love-making are. For my part, I think a woman ought to forgive any shortcoming except the crime against herself."

"And I," declared the expert spiritedly, "think that she ought to forgive the crime against herself first of all! I think that it is mean, petty, egotistic, for a woman to make her personal

rights and dignities the measure of her affection for a man. Good heavens, is marriage nothing more or better than hand holding in a window embrasure or kissing behind the door? Do not human relations, human interests, fellowship in a hundred enterprises—social and domestic, parental, business, civic, and whatnot—does not such fellowship unite husbands and wives as securely as the bond of the flesh? Is that the only important bond?

"But suppose that it is! Suppose that Claire—any Claire—is willing to go on record as considering that the chief tie between herself and her husband, the only one in which failure and disloyalty count—what, I ask you, is it going to profit her to stand on her rights and divorce him? A woman who is so intensely set upon the exaction of her own peculiar rights from a man will never be happy with any man. She is thinking chiefly of herself, and no matter what her poor husband's faults are—whether they are social or domestic or amatory—she will regard them from the point of view of how they affect her pride and happiness and dignity. She will suffer as much because he is a social boor or bore as because he is promiscuously fond of women. Every woman must make up her mind to be married to a man who is going to wound her in one way or another, just as she is going to wound him in one way or another. Heaven has not yet perfected the creation of the blameless husband or wife. If one marries, one must be prepared to suffer. There's only one suffering worse."

"Not to marry, I suppose?" jeered the confirmed spinster.

"I won't go so far as to say that," the expert tactfully evaded the chal-

lenge. "The worse suffering, to my mind, is to be a lonely, dreary derelict of the matrimonial seas. To have married generally means, you see, that a woman has a taste for man's society, a desire for domesticity—'wants a home,' as the old-fashioned phrase had it. Well, if she is that kind of a woman, and if she gives up the effort to keep what she has acquired by marriage—her husband and their joint enterprises—she isn't likely to make a success of the difficult art of living alone. That's a great art. It means large interests, a career out of the ordinary, a cheerful disposition, the capacity for loving causes and for making friends—also, for making money! Nine women out of every ten who fail in matrimony are not gifted with those qualities. They are the dreariest sights in the world—drab, colorless, middle-aged women living alone, disappointed in life, soured, without expectations! If I were Claire—any Claire—I'd put up with things a thousand times worse than a philandering Arthur rather than face such a future. And, after all, there's one advantage about a philanderer."

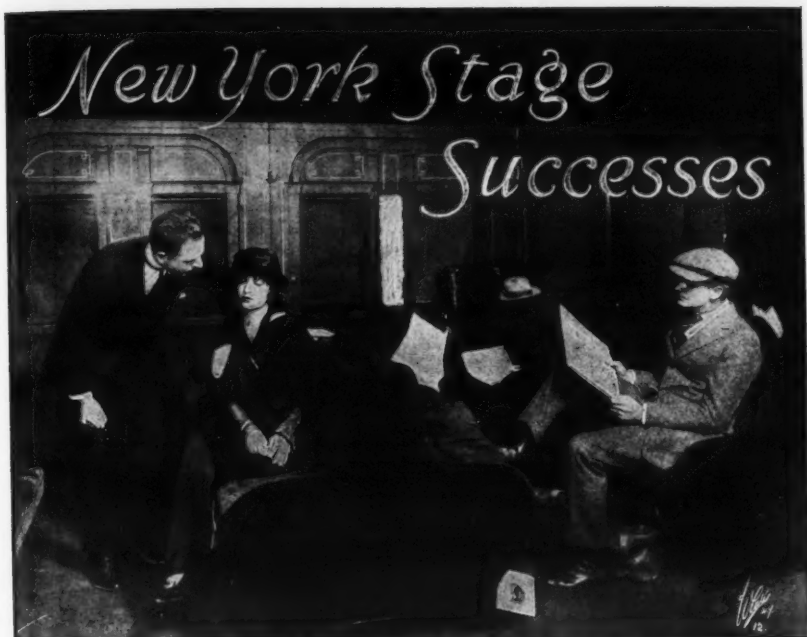
"What is it?"

"Why, this—that he is almost always ready to make love to his wife in the interim of making love to other women. He comes home for his vacations, so to speak. And there's always the hope that some day he'll come home to stay! Some day the red-haired and the black-haired and all the other charmers will be used up. And novelty will be gone from every woman in the world, except the one who has been at home all the time. Oh, with a philanderer—and patience—one can look forward to a really delightful silver wedding, and a Darby-and-Joan old age."



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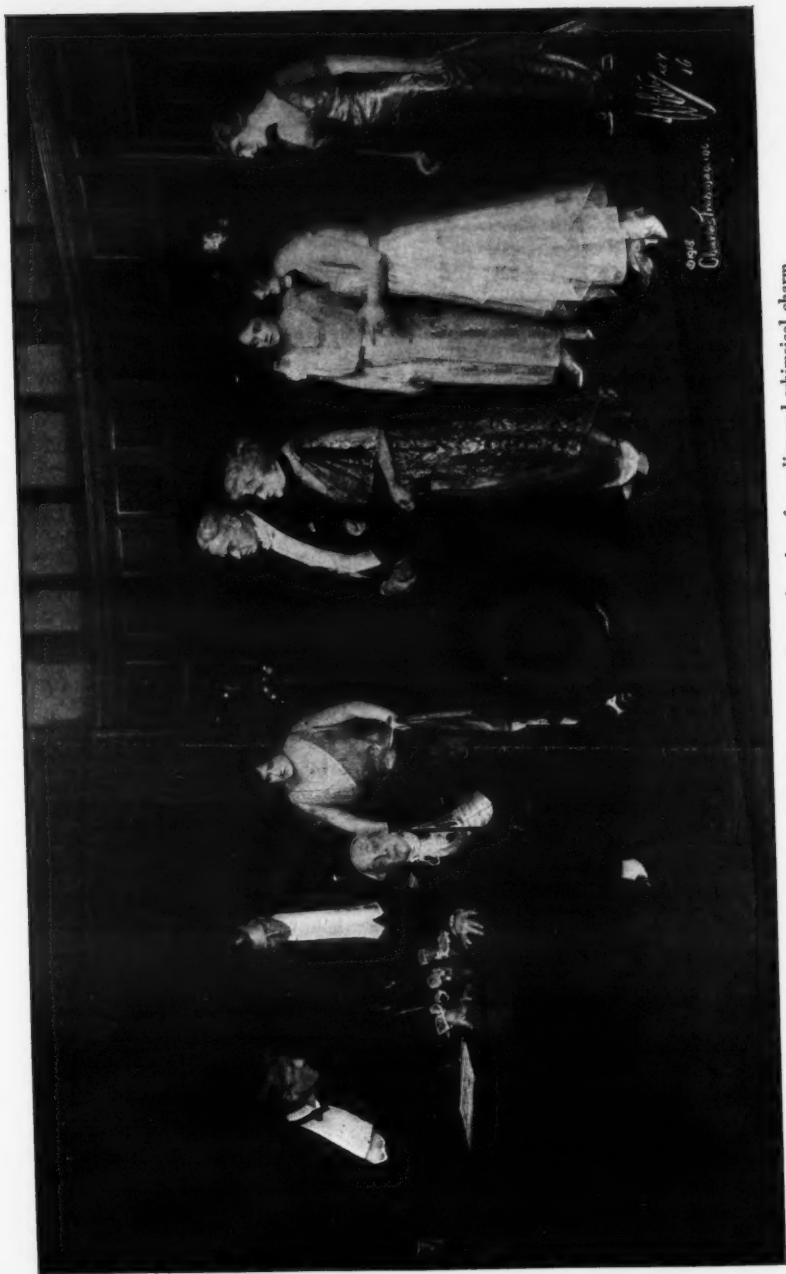


An interesting moment in Rachel Crothers' brilliant comedy, "A Little Journey," which has made one of the big and surprising hits of the season.

HOWEVER much one may deplore the quality of the dramas offered during the season by New York's some forty-five theaters, and however much one may regret that the big outstanding successes have been so few, never has a season's entertainment covered so much ground or catered to so many and so varied tastes. The highly flavored bedroom farces may have seemed unnecessarily plentiful and popular, yet we have had the exquisite poetry and symbolism of Maeterlinck's "Betrothal," the charming and whimsical fantasy of Barrie's "Dear Brutus," the stark realism and intellectual appeal of Tolstoy's "Redemption," the rich humor of the British Tommy in the trenches in "The Better 'Ole," the American war feeling in "Friendly Enemies," New York's ghetto life in "Lit-

tle Brother," mystery, war, and Prussian militarism in the sensational spy drama, "Three Faces East," delicious character comedies in "Lightnin'" and "The Little Journey," polite comedy and wit in "Tea for Three" and "Be Calm, Camilla," interesting studies of bachelor life in London, Paris, and New York in "Tiger!" "Tiger!" "Sleeping Partners," "Three Wise Fools," and "Daddies," the atmosphere of San Francisco's Chinatown in "East is West," of old New Orleans in "Mis' Nelly," of romantic Virginia in "Toby's Bow," of Greenwich Village in "Hobohemia," and fancy, poetry and thrills in the unique plays of Dunsany, particularly "The Gods of the Mountain."

And this list does not take into account the numerous musical comedies, lavish spectacles and girl-and-music



A scene from Act I of J. M. Barrie's "Dear Brutus," a play of peculiar and whimsical charm.

shows designed for the well-known "tired business man," such as "The Follies," "The Midnight Frolic," "The Century Revue," the Winter Garden's "Monte Cristo, Jr.," and this year's remarkable success at the Hippodrome.

The first two acts of Miss Crothers' comedy, "A Little Journey," are set in a Pullman sleeper, and the success of the play is largely due to the skill with which the author has selected her passengers. They are types—every one of them—and seen through Miss Crothers' observing and humorous eyes, the "journey" across country is delightful. The heroine is a society worldling who has lost her money, refused a poor, lukewarm lover, and, in despair, is going West to live as a dependent upon a married brother. When she discovers that she has lost her tickets and is

to be put off the train at the first station, a young ranchman in the car persuades her to accept a loan of her fare. They become interested in each other, but the Westerner is unable to cheer her with his own wholesome philosophy. She longs for death. Then, quite suddenly, the train is wrecked. The final act finds our passengers all alive, but battered and broken, waiting at sunrise in the desert mountains for relief.



Janet Beecher as *Laura Bruce* and Gail Kane as *Edna Crane*, in Act III of "The Woman in Room 13."

The scene is full of humor; but the danger through which they have passed has had a regenerating effect. The New York heroine and the rancher resolve to work the future out together, and to start life with a ready-made baby, whose poor mother has been killed in the wreck. Told thus, without details, the plot sounds absurdly simple, but the interestingly familiar setting, the clever lines, the humorous characteriza-

tions, and the fine acting have combined to make "A Little Journey" quite worth taking.

"The Woman in Room 13" is ingenious and decidedly absorbing melodrama, with plenty of thrills and suspense. Samuel Shipman and Max Marcin—two authors not distinguished for either subtlety or finesse—collaborated in the composition of the play. The prologue has perhaps the best and strongest drama in the piece—the situation of a husband and wife upon the edge of a divorce. Each one has another love in life, but after the divorce the ex-husband takes to drink and, as a private detective, pursues the wife he has lost, and strives to recover her from the man who has taken her from him. There follows a series of thrilling adventures including the murder of a man in "Room 13," the much-criticized scene of a scantily clad woman (played by Gail Kane) climbing down a fire escape, and a criminal-court trial. The play is splendidly acted, and in spite of its luridness—or perhaps be-

cause of it—has made a popular success. Janet Beecher and Lowell Sherman have the leading rôles.

Barrie's "Dear Brutus" is sheer delight—a "Midsummer Night's Dream," with the eccentric Mr. Lob as an elderly Puck. The theme of the play is what might have happened had we a chance of living our lives differently;

and it is Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar" that supplies the rather far-fetched name.

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves
that we are underlings.

The group of guests whom Mr. Lob has gathered about him on a certain Midsummer eve include a philanderer with his wife and his affinity, an artist who has been driven to drink by the scorn of his wife, a thieving butler whose pet aversion is a certain haughty lady of fashion, and two commonplace, happy folks of middle age. Into the enchanted forest that the host conjures up at midnight, his guests walk, one by one, to find the selves they might have been. Particularly charming



The ever-delightful Ann Pennington, in Ziegfeld's "Frolics."



Lovely young Marilynn Miller, of Ziegfeld's "Frolics"—famous for her dainty, rosebud charm and clever dancing.

is the scene between the artist, who is William Gillette, and his adorable, might-have-been daughter, played by Helen Hayes. There is here poetic humor, wistful beauty, and touching pathos. Other characters illustrate the exuberant fancy that might be expected from Barrie in a mystic, magic wood. The philandering husband is married to the affinity and flirting with his wife, while the pilfering butler is a rich financier

married to the lady of fashion, who is enamored of her vulgarian husband.

In the final act the guests come back to their real selves, impressed and touched by their experience, but the artist and his wife are the only ones promised a real reform.

The distinguished cast includes Hilda Spong, Louis Calvert, J. H. Brewer, Myrtle Tannehill, Elizabeth Risdon, and Violet Kemble Cooper.



Edwin Nicander is the hypnotic subject, *Chaumet*, in "Keep It to Yourself." Ethel Stanard is the bride.



The bridesmaids in "The Melting of Molly," a comedy with music, made from the novel by Maria Thompson Davies.



Edwin Nicander

Ethel Stanard

Macey Harlam

Helen Holmes

"He entered my room and kissed me—arrest him!"

Scene from the undeniably funny and lively farce, "Keep It to Yourself."



The bridal scene from "The Melting of Molly." Isabelle Lowe is *Molly*.

With something of a plot, taken from the novel by Dumas, "Monte Cristo, Jr.," the Winter Garden extravaganza, comes near dazzling the eye with its beautiful women, its dancing, its dash and spirit, and its gorgeous scenic effects, among which may be mentioned the Cave of Jewels and the harbor of Marseilles. The cast of singers and dancers is a large one, but the best of the songs are sung by Charles Purcell, who has a really good voice.

At right: Charles Purcell and Perle Germonde in "Monte Cristo, Jr."

Below: Misses De Anguillar, Francisco, Germonde, and Bruce.



Mrs. Fiske's new play is one of old days in New Orleans, written by Lawrence Eyre. It is called on the program "a comedy of moonshine, madness, and make-believe." It is all of these—and more, for it supplies Mrs. Fiske with the most charming, most human, most irresistibly amusing rôle she has ever had. As a comedienne she literally shines.

to-be adventuress, inducing her to claim that she is already the boy's wife. The lovers quarrel, of course, and *Mis' Nelly* arrives just in time. She conceives the idea of a brilliant and humorous revenge upon *Georges Durand*, whom she has never forgiven. She dons the gown she wore at Mardi Gras back in '86, and, with her vivacity and youthful spirits, her wit and charm, so



Hamilton Revelle, Mrs. Fiske, and Frederic Burt in a charming scene from "*Mis' Nelly of N'Orleans*."

Twenty years before the play opens *Mis' Nelly's* engagement to *Georges Durand*, a hot-headed young Creole, has been broken. She has lived in Paris ever since, until now, having learned that her only niece is in love with the son of *Durand*, she hurries home to break up the match. The father of the boy is also bitterly resentful of the affair. He has plotted with a supposed-

delights the sore-hearted young man who has quarreled with her niece that he proposes to her. *Mis' Nelly* accepts him—but for only a short time. As the prospective daughter of the man who jilted her, she fairly bubbles over with the humor of the situation. But it is all a feint, and in the end the young people are reconciled, and *Mis' Nelly* is re-engaged to the boy's father.

When "Three Faces East" appeared in the early fall some critic predicted that its success would depend upon "the number of puzzle lovers" in New York's theatergoing public. Evidently there is a field for this type of play, for practically all season its box office has been engaged in "turning them away." The

play is the work of young Anthony Paul Kelly, and is a sort of combination of "Cheating Cheaters" and "Under Cover." It has, however, a war and secret-service background, with spies—or potential spies—galore. The story concerns itself with the search of the British government for one *Franz*



Emmett Corrigan and Violet Heming in the mystery war play, "Three Faces East."



Another scene in "Three Faces East," with beautiful Violet Heming in the leading woman's rôle.

Boelke, arch German spy. The heroine is a beautiful young *Fräulein Helene*, supposedly sent from Berlin to enter the family of a British cabinet minister and rout him. There she finds a mysterious, suave butler (Emmett Corrigan) who greets her with the password, "Three Faces East." There is double-crossing and strategy until the mystification is complete. The harmless people turn out to be the most sinister sort of German agents, and the suspects are all innocent.

The play has absolutely no human interest, although Miss Heming is appealing in all her scenes. Produced by Cohan and Harris, which is headed by the indefatigable George M., the play is expert in action and setting, as might be expected. London is bombarded and the audience gassed at the end of the second act. The success of the play seems to disprove the theory that people don't like to be fooled, and the various reactions of the audience are interesting to watch.



Florence Morrison as *Aunt Jim*, Nora Bayes as *Betty Burt*, and William Kent as *Uncle Tody* in the uproariously funny "*Ladies First*."

In the delightful fooling of the trio above one almost forgets to follow the plot of Nora Bayes' latest entertainment, which is full of songs, dancing, jokes and stunts. But there is a real story back of it all in the masterful

Aunt Jim's plan to make *Betty* mayor of the town. *Betty* is in love with the opposition's candidate, and cares not a hoot for politics until she is fairly driven into the fight. Then she resorts to original methods.

Upon a rose-pink chemise hangs the plot of "Up in Mabel's Room."

Two years before his marriage, Garry, in a moment of folly, had given Mabel Essington this intimate garment, embroidered with the inscription, "Mabel from Garry." Later, at a house party with his jealous, silly little bride, Geraldine, Garry attempts to recover the garment, but Mabel is contrary and refuses to give it up. The innumerable complications that ensue disturb three otherwise happy love affairs. And the lively search for the elusive bit of lingerie continues one entire, unforgettable night. But the tangles are finally straightened out and everybody finds that her husband or his wife has been perfectly innocent all the time.

At right: Hazel Dawn as Mabel and John Cumberland as Garry.



John Cumberland, Hazel Dawn, and Dudley Hawley, in "Up in Mabel's Room."



George Marion as *Uncle Toby* in "Toby's Bow" has created a memorable stage character.

In John Taintor Foote's romantic comedy of the South, *Uncle Toby*, the old family servant, is the star. The play, which is slow and not overloaded with interest, concerns itself with a New York novelist who has "lost his soul and his art in fast living and the writing of best sellers," and who is sent out of town by his publisher that he may

regain his health and perhaps find regeneration or inspiration. In Virginia he finds both, and a sweetheart, too, whom he (incognito) helps to write a book to save the old home. But his real triumph comes when he receives Uncle Toby's bow—a sacred rite reserved for only the *family* Uncle Toby serves.



Mollie King can sing and dance as well as act. From musical comedy to moving pictures—then as the hit of the Century roof revue—and now singing and dancing in “Good Morning, Judge”—has been her stage record.

Pinero's old farce, “The Magistrate,” is the backbone of the musical “Good Morning, Judge,” which pleased with its fresh tunes, its lyrics, fun, and spirited dancing, but most of all with the buffooneries and antics of that clever comedian, Mr. George Hassell, who played *His Honor*, the misled police

magistrate. Charles King played the lad whose age had been curtailed by his widowed mother, and Mollie King was the music teacher with whom he fell in love against all parental orders. “I am so young, and you are so beautiful,” was one of their most taking songs.



Leo Ditrichstein and Jane Grey in "The Marquis de Priola."

A tragedy, for all its relieving comedy, is Henri Lavedan's "Marquis de Priola." Parisian in atmosphere and characterization, a marvelously subtle study of an aging libertine, the play is strongly dramatic. The marquis, attached to the Italian embassy in Paris, is a man of proud family, utterly cynical and contemptuous of the world, whose greatest joy in life has been the conquest of women's hearts. The remarkable interpretation which Mr. Ditrichstein gives of this refined but dissolute character is like a finished portrait from the brush of a master. It suggests Mansfield's *Baron Chevrial*.

The play presents *Priola's* affairs with three women of such distinctly different types that his subtle methods of conquest must needs vary greatly. The first is *Madame de Valleroi*, a frivolous society butterfly (played by Jane Grey) whom he humiliates after leading her on to confess her infatuation for himself; the second is his divorced wife, now *Madame le Chesne* (played by Lily Cahill) whom he seeks to draw back into his net; and the third is the good wife (Katherine Emmett) of his friend, *Doctor Savieres*. *Priola* has a young ward, *Pierre* (played by Brandon Tynan) of whom he is fond and proud, planning to bequeath to him his fortune and ancient name. At the opening of the play, *Priola* is trying to launch *Pierre* upon a life of pleasure, teaching him his cynical doctrine of contempt for women. But the boy is troubled, remonstrates, and finally rebels, turning hotly upon his benefactor. When *Pierre* learns by chance this his own mother was once a victim of the marquis, *Priola* rises in a rage that brings on a stroke of paralysis. As he falls, he cries out that *Pierre* is his own son. The boy kneels beside him, stricken. Fated to linger in life for years, blind and helpless, as a result of his excesses, *Priola* goes down to defeat. One feels that his greatest defeat is not physical, but in the contempt of his son, whose admiration his pride and vanity craved.

WHOSE HONOR?



ILLUSTRATED BY G. W. HARTING

Happily married, why should that skeleton rise from the past to threaten such disaster?

A PEACEFUL quiet reigned in the room. The sunlight glinted intermittently through the windows, the silver and delicate china on the breakfast table twinkling back a fitful answer. The man and woman seated at the table were both absorbed in their morning's mail.

"I'll be shot if I do!"

The man's sudden exclamation rocked violently across the pleasant calm. Lady Toringhay looked up hastily from the perusal of a note of invitation. There was a certain nervousness in the quick way she lifted her head. It held a suggestion of startled defiance, reminding one of the alert, instinctive wariness of some forest creature.

She was an unusually beautiful woman, and, from the matt-gold hair swathed closely round her small, fine head to the narrow, silk-clad feet, there was a curiously distinctive "finish" about her whole appearance. Five years of life as a successful actress had taught her an entirely unself-conscious consciousness of effect.

Sir Mark Toringhay fully appreciated this quality in his wife. He was a somewhat grave, undemonstrative man, fifteen years her senior, but the disparity in age and the difference of

temperament had been easily bridged by a love that only deepened with each successive happy year of their life together.

He smiled at her now across the table.

"Did I startle you, Dreida?"

The faint flush that had risen to her face faded slowly.

"You did, a little," she answered lightly. "What's wrong? You sounded annoyed."

"It's nothing of very great importance—only that the Golden Reef Mining Company want me on their board of directors. Or rather," dryly, "they want my name there. I've refused 'em once. I don't believe in marketing one's name. But Charn's a persistent kind of beggar, and now he's written me a personal letter."

Dreida's face went suddenly milk-white.

"Whom did you say?" she asked. Her voice was curiously devoid of expression.

"Charn—Philip Charn. He's a company promoter of sorts. I know very little about him, but I don't much care for what I've seen of the fellow."

Beneath the shelter of the table, Dreida's restless fingers shredded the

note of invitation she had been reading when Torrynghay's impatient exclamation had broken in upon its perusal.

"Then—then I shouldn't have anything to do with him." She forced herself to speak indifferently.

"I don't propose to." Torrynghay rose, picking up the little heaps of letters in front of him. "I'll refer him to my former communication," he added grimly, as he left the room.

As soon as she was alone, Drieda Torrynghay moved swiftly to the place where her husband had sat at table and began turning over the empty envelopes that had held his mail, scanning the superscription upon each one with eyes that held a sick dread.

Suddenly her hand clenched on one of them, and she stared down at the thick, bold writing that sprawled across it. It had been familiar enough to her once—years ago. Now it leaped at her like a menace from the past.

She glanced around the handsome room—at the mellowed paneling of the walls, the rich, dim colorings of the Persian carpet, the fire of scented logs blazing on the great hearth. Its beauty seemed to strike her afresh. It signified so much—the assured status, the happy, sheltered existence that was now hers; above all, the love of the man who had just left her.

The envelope addressed in that thick, assertive handwriting seemed to her like a splotch of violent, angry color flung brutally into the midst of some low-toned harmony, utterly destroying it.

Gripping it between tense, revolting fingers, as one might grip a noisome reptile, she carried it swiftly to the fire and dropped it into the flames.

II.

"Lady Torrynghay's name heads the list of names of well-known people who have promised their services. She will appear in one of the parts which added

luster to her fame when, as Miss Dreida Lessing, she was for five years the bright, particular star of the Imperial Theater."

Philip Charn emitted a low whistle of astonishment as he caught sight of the foregoing paragraph in the morning paper.

He reread it attentively, taking particular note of where and when the benefit performance to which it had reference was to be held. Then he rang up Leith, Dowse & Co. and booked a seat in the back row of the stalls.

"It's playing it a bit low down," he muttered discontentedly, as he hung up the receiver.

But there was no sign of weakening or of vacillation in his face as he turned away from the phone.

It was a dark, powerful face, clean-shaven and square-jawed, and the thin, rather cynical lips lay one above the other with a suggestion of ruthlessness in their firm closing. Yet there was a certain saturnine beauty about it. One could imagine Charn to be the type of man who might possess an almost irresistible attraction for a woman, if he chose to exert it.

When he took his seat in the theater on the afternoon of the benefit performance, the heads of more than one of the women sitting near were turned in his direction, in their eyes a shy, feminine perception of the virility of the lean, dark face with its dominant jaw.

Charn appeared completely unconscious of their veiled scrutiny. With arms folded across his chest, he leaned back in his seat, watching the various items of the performance with the half-shut eyes of indifference. Only when Lady Torrynghay appeared, it might have been observed that his hands clenched themselves suddenly and a curious light shone beneath his lowered lids.

The afternoon had closed with a



"But *I* have a great deal—to say to you." He spoke rapidly, in low, insistent tones. "I must see you, Dreida."

drizzling rain. As the people streamed out from the theater, they were met by thin, drifting veils of yellow mist stealing westward from the city and by pavements gleaming wetly beneath the murky light of the street lamps.

A few stragglers, braving the gathering fog, hovered eagerly round the stage door, watching the brief, occasional passage of one or another of the recent performers from its

threshold to the interior of a waiting brougham or landaulette.

Presently a big, luxurious limousine slid up to the curb. A woman's figure, wrapped in heavy furs, emerged from the stage door and crossed the pavement. But before she could enter the car, a man stepped out among the groups of onlookers and touched her arm.

"Dreida!" he said quietly.

Lady Torringhay swung around with a stifled cry. In the yellow gleam of a near-by street lamp, her face showed suddenly white and drawn.

"You!" she whispered with shaking lips.

"Yes. You don't appear very pleased to see me." Charn's mouth twisted in a sardonic smile.

With an effort, she pulled herself together.

"Did you expect that I would be? I have nothing to say to you. Let me pass, please."

She moved resolutely toward the car, but he barred her way, courteously, but unmistakably.

"But I have a great deal—to say to you." He spoke rapidly, in low, insistent tones. "I must see you, Dreida. It's absolutely necessary that I should."

She cast a swift, distasteful glance at the curious faces of the little crowd, the peering heads craned forward in prying effort to catch the low-toned conversation.

"I fail to see any such necessity—" she began. Then, reading the inflexible determination in his face, she went on hastily: "We can't talk here. You'd better come with me in the car."

Charn helped her in and seated himself beside her. The immaculate footman, standing motionless at the door of the limousine, appeared suddenly galvanized into life. Deftly he arranged the heavy fur robe across her knees, closed the door, and took his place beside the chauffeur, and the car purred away into the thickening gloom.

For a few moments they drove in unbroken silence. To Dreida, it seemed as if the blank wall of fog that closed up against the windows shut her into a prison of which Charn was the jailer. She felt like a rat in a trap. The slender gloved hands that lay on her lap beneath the fur robe were trembling.

At last she nerved herself to speak!

"You haven't told me yet why you've forced yourself upon me in this manner?"

"Is it so surprising that I should seek to see you again, Dreida?" he asked meaningly.

She stared fixedly in front of her.

"I thought you were dead," she said in flat tones.

He smiled.

"You don't seem exactly—what shall we say?—gratified to find that I'm not."

She looked at him with steady eyes.

"I wish—you *were* dead," she answered with sudden fierceness. "Go on—tell me quickly what it is you want with me! If it's money——"

He laughed disagreeably.

"You're too crude. Certainly the matter has to do with money—indirectly. But it would take too long to explain, here and now, the precise kind of help I want from you. If you will arrange a rendezvous——"

She interrupted him violently:

"I decline to meet you—anywhere!"

"I think not," he said quietly.

"Forgive me if I seem presumptuous, but—it will be greatly to your disadvantage if you refuse."

Under the significant glance he bent upon her, the blood ebbed slowly from her face, and a look of sheer terror grew and deepened in her eyes.

"What—what do you mean?" she faltered.

"Just what I say—that it will be to your disadvantage if you decline to meet me. If you prefer it, I will come to see you at your house."

"Impossible! Even you," cuttingly, "must realize that."

"Then—where shall we meet? I'm entirely in your hands."

For a moment she racked her brains desperately. At last:

"There's a little inn—on the Cobham road—the Seven Sisters. Do you know it?"

He nodded.

"Yes, I know it."

"Then I'll meet you there—to-morrow afternoon."

She lifted the speaking tube and gave an order to the chauffeur. An instant later, the car drew to a standstill beside the curb.

"Now go—go!" she exclaimed in a choked voice.

The footman had already opened the door. Charn stepped out and stood for a moment bareheaded on the pavement.

"Good-by, Lady Tarringhay. Thanks so much for the lift," he said easily.

Then the car sped away into the fog once more. The woman inside leaned back against the cushions, nerveless and spent. She seemed scarcely to breathe, and dark shadows had painted themselves beneath her closed lids.

III.

A small two-seater streaked down the road, slackening speed, and, turning a corner neatly, came slowly to a standstill in the big garage which modern necessity had added to the old-fashioned inn of the Seven Sisters.

Its solitary occupant, a woman closely veiled, slipped from her place at the steering wheel and, tossing a brief direction to the man in charge of the garage, made her way into the sheltered garden that fronted the hotel.

Philip Charn, who had been standing in the porch smoking, flung aside his cigarette at her approach and advanced quickly to meet her.

"Here you are!" he exclaimed. "Come in. I've engaged a room and ordered tea to be served there."

"You can countermand that order," swiftly. "Did you imagine for one moment that I would—have tea with you?"

"No," he admitted wryly. "But it supplied a simple *raison d'être* for our meeting."

Dreida swept into the house.

In silence he led the way into a sunny

parlor where a maidservant was laying the table for tea.

Dreida crossed to the window and stood there silently, her back to the room, until the clink of cups and saucers ceased and the sound of a closing door told her that she was alone with Charn. Then she turned and, loosening her veil, flung it back as if it stifled her.

"Now," she said, breathing rather quickly, "what is it? What do you want with me?"

His eyes fastened on her face.

"You're a very beautiful woman, Dreida," he said with a sudden irrelevance. "More beautiful now, I think, than even in those days——"

She checked him with a quick, imperious gesture.

"We needn't speak of the past. Tell me why you wished to see me. And please be as brief as you can."

"Very good," he assented, with a curiously amused smile. "To be brief, then, has your husband, by any chance, mentioned to you that he's been invited to become a director on the board of the Golden Reef Mining Company?"

"Yes. He mentioned it."

"And you know he has refused?"

His glance caught and held hers.

"Yes. I know that, too."

"That simplifies things, then. Well, *he must change his mind*. There's no one would hesitate to put his money into a concern with which Mark Tarringhay was associated. His name is as good as a guarantee. You see"—again with that chill little smile, as if something amused him—"I pay you the compliment of commending your choice of a husband."

She turned away.

"All this has nothing to do with me," she began.

"Pardon me. It has—everything to do with you. I want Tarringhay's name on my board of directors—and I mean to have it. I didn't quite see how I was



Dreida crossed to the window and stood there silently,
her back to the room.

going to get over his scruples at first. Then, when a paragraph in the newspaper informed me that Dreida Lessing had become Lady Torringhay, it made it all plain sailing." He paused. "You will secure your husband's name for me."

"I?"

"Yes, you. I've been making inquiries, and I hear that Torringhay is over head and ears in love with his wife. That's just as it should be, of course," sardonically. "The advantage, from my point of view, is that it means

I can count on your influence with him. To please you, if you ask him, he will consent to do what I want."

"Only I shan't ask him! I shouldn't dream of doing such a thing!" She made a hasty step toward the door. "If that was what you wished to see me about, you might have spared yourself the pains."

"I'm not so sure of that. If you make a personal matter of it, telling him that you have absolute confidence in me and that I am an old friend of yours—that, at least, would be true, wouldn't it?" mockingly—"I think you can work the oracle all right."

Her face flamed scarlet at the gibing reference to their friendship, and she turned on him fiercely.

"I won't do it,

Philip! My husband's name is a clean one. I decline to ask him to soil it by bolstering up one of your rotten companies!"

Charn regarded her reflectively.

"I hope you don't mean that," he said.

"I do mean it—every word of it! Nothing would induce me to ask my husband such a thing!"

"I wish you'd reconsider it," he persisted gently. "I would so much rather not have to use—force."

"Force?" Her startled eyes stared into his, incredulous, demanding. "Force? What do you mean?"

"Why"—his face hardened—"I don't imagine you would wish your husband—Sir Mark Torringhay, remember, the immaculate bulwark of British respectability—to hear about a certain month of June—that month we spent in France together at the château in the woods at Rose-le-roi?"

Dreida swayed suddenly forward. She leaned her hands on the table for support.

"You wouldn't— You can't—" Her voice stammered off into horrified silence.

"It would be trailing a golden dream in the dust, wouldn't it?" he said meditatively. "But needs must when the devil drives. And I'd smelt down even a golden dream to ensure the successful floating of the Golden Reef Company." He paused; then added quietly: "It's up to you to decide. Either you use your influence so that your husband's name figures on my board of directors, or he hears the circumstances of your stay at Rose-le-roi."

There was a stunned look of horror in her eyes.

"You couldn't—you couldn't be so vile!" she whispered.

Charn shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps, if you had loved me—a little longer, I could not, but," sneering, "your love was so—short-lived."

"I loved you just as long as I believed in you," she retorted passionately. "Oh, it wasn't fair! I was young, and a fool, and I thought love sanctified everything. You let me think it—you *made* me think it!"

"And then—then, when I found that you had lied to me, that what was to be my whole world was only an—incident to you, I left you!"

"Yes, you left me. So, on the whole," cynically, "I think you still owe me something. Now is your chance to pay it."

She shivered away from him, averting her eyes as if from something repulsive.

"And this is your revenge?" she said slowly.

He shook his head, smiling.

"Oh, scarcely that. Call it a business arrangement—for our mutual benefit."

"No! No! I tell you I won't ask Mark to do this thing!" she cried, flaming suddenly into defiance.

"Think it over," he suggested temperately. "It's quite simple. Your husband's name for my board of directors, and the past remains—the past. I swear you will have nothing further to fear from me—now or ever. But if you refuse, I shall have no alternative but to acquaint him with that little 'incident' at Rose-le-roi."

She listened to him with bent head. When she spoke again, it was with a kind of feverish eagerness, as if some sudden hope was struggling to life within her.

"Philip—tell me! Is this company—the Golden Reef—is it *sound*? What are you asking my husband to put his name to?"

His eyes glinted amusedly.

"All such investments are—speculative. The public knows that," he replied noncommittally.

The hope flickered out and died.

"You mean," she said bitterly, "the thing's not honest. And you want me

to persuade my husband to guarantee a swindle. Well, I won't do it! Tell him what you choose!"

"Is that your last word?"

Under the keen, merciless glance he flung at her, her nerve broke.

"Oh, no, no! Don't tell him! Oh"—she caught at his arm, peering into his face with hunted eyes—"for pity's sake, don't tell him! If you do, it means—it means the end of everything for me!"

She had lost all self-command. Thick, laboring sobs choked her voice. But he remained unmoved—coolly, determinedly untouched.

"The decision rests entirely with you," he answered composedly. "I can give you—let me see—a week. If, by seven o'clock next Tuesday, I have not heard from Tarringhay that he consents to his name appearing on my list of directors, I shall know which way you have chosen—and act accordingly." He paused. "I shall then give myself the pleasure of calling on your husband. You understand?"

He waited a moment; then, as she made no answer, he went quietly out of the room, leaving her alone. Charn was not the type of man to risk an anticlimax.

IV.

The week of grace had dragged itself to an end at last. Looking back, it seemed to Dreida as if each hour of the long days and longer nights had been an hour of mental conflict, of unremitting effort not to urge her husband to agree to Charn's proposal—not to say the few words that would win her freedom from the grim shadow that had suddenly arisen out of the past, threatening her happiness.

It would be so easy! Mark would do anything to please her, she knew, and if she assured him of Charn's integrity, he would frankly take her word on the matter. And then he need never know

of that mad, reckless month at Rose-le-roi. Her happiness would be once more secure—*safe!*

Sometimes the temptation to use her influence with her husband was well-nigh irresistible. Supposing the Golden Reef Company *did* collapse like a pricked bubble—as she felt sure it would, once Philip Charn had lined his pockets—there would follow only a brief scandal. A certain amount of mud would be thrown at the directors, and after a time the affair would die down and be forgotten—at least, by the world in general; those who had lost their fortunes in the crash might have longer memories. Whereas, if she let Charn carry his story to her husband's ears, it would mean the utter annihilation of her happiness—and of Mark's.

The recognition of this latter fact—that Mark's happiness, too, would go down in the general ruin—was the most insidious part of the temptation that assailed her. It was so fatally easy to argue that Mark must suffer either way, and that he would rather be mixed up in an unsavory company-flotation scandal than learn the ugly, unforgivable secret that lay hidden in Dreida Lessing's past.

For that her husband would find it unforgivable she never doubted. Mark Tarringhay was not the man to look leniently upon that particular type of folly. The very depth of his feeling for his wife would make it doubly difficult for him to recognize the false vision, the mirage of love, by which she had been cheated.

With the whole strength of her tortured soul, Dreida fought against the persuasive argument that, since Mark was bound to suffer in any case, it did not signify much which way such suffering came.

Within herself, she knew that the whole matter resolved itself definitely and unmistakably into a choice between saving her own honor or her husband's.

That was the bitter decision Charn had forced upon her.

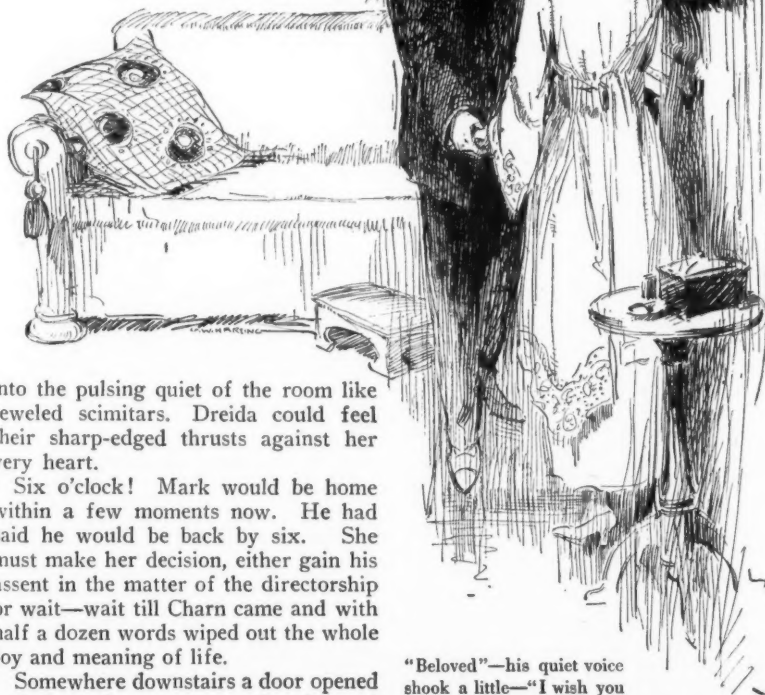
Torrington's name stood clean and unblemished—a synonym for sheer integrity. And if she bought Charn's silence by the means that he had offered her, she realized that the price must ultimately be her husband's honor.

His honor or hers! Like a pendulum the words swung backward and forward in her brain. His—hers! The clock on the chimneypiece seemed to take up the words and beat them out relentlessly.

Suddenly, across that ceaseless refrain of words which had grown almost meaningless, came the strike of the hour—six silvery strokes, cutting

—he had given her till seven o'clock! It was only six now.

Then came a step on the stairs —her husband's step. It was Mark then—not



into the pulsing quiet of the room like jeweled scimitars. Dreida could feel their sharp-edged thrusts against her very heart.

Six o'clock! Mark would be home within a few moments now. He had said he would be back by six. She must make her decision, either gain his assent in the matter of the directorship or wait—wait till Charn came and with half a dozen words wiped out the whole joy and meaning of life.

Somewhere downstairs a door opened and shut; there was a confused sound of voices in the hall below. Charn could not be here yet! Seven o'clock

"Beloved"—his quiet voice shook a little—"I wish you could have told me, trusted me sooner. I knew, you see. I knew when I asked you to be my wife."

Charn! Unconsciously she gripped the edge of the chimneypiece, the knuckles of her hands bone-white with the tensility of her grip. The door opened, and Mark came in.

"Sweetheart——"

The familiar, caressing tenderness of his voice struck at her like a blow, nerving her to swift, unshakable decision.

"Mark, I have something to tell you."

Her voice was quite steady while she told him. She was dimly conscious of a vague surprise at the quiet, unemotional sound of it.

"He had told me that he was married, and that his wife was in an asylum, incurably insane. That was the reason why he could never marry me. And I thought love—such a wonderful love as ours—justified everything. I was ready to make the sacrifice he asked. It didn't even seem a sacrifice—then. Afterwards, I found out that he was not married at all. The story of his wife had been a pure invention. In those days, I was nothing but a struggling young actress, quite unknown, and it had spared him the necessity of asking me to marry him. I was to be only an episode in his life." She paused, then continued dully: "I left him as soon as I knew the truth. But, you see, I didn't know in time."

She waited with closed eyes, bracing herself to meet the torrent of his anger; just, righteous anger—she knew that.

She heard him move, step toward her. Then she felt his hands—seeking, holding hers. She opened startled eyes. There was no anger in his face, only a profound tenderness and thanksgiving.

"Beloved"—his quiet voice shook a little—"I wish you could have told me, trusted me sooner. I knew, you see. I knew when I asked you to be my wife. It's been the one hard thing all these years—thinking you didn't believe my love for you could cover that."

An hour later, Torringhay sat alone in his study waiting for the coming of Philip Charn.

Punctually as the clock of a near-by church intoned the hour, he came. Torringhay did not rise as the man entered the room. He only moved a little sideways in his chair, so that his grave eyes could meet the other's glance—the glance of the hunter as he nears his quarry.

"You've lost no time." There was a chill inflection of contempt in Torringhay's quiet voice. "I know what you've come to sell. But you're a good business man, Charn—you'll understand. You've missed your market."



MY MISTAKE!

I CAUGHT her in my arms and kissed her. She looked at me in surprise—but did not protest.

"Dearest," I said, "you are the most beautiful woman in the world. In your eyes shines the secret of the stars. And the fragrance of your hair tantalizes me with a longing unfulfilled. When I touch you, I tremble. And I love you as I never loved before. To-night, in the glow of the midnight moon, I will be at the pagoda in the rose garden—waiting. And when you come——"

She broke away from me in horror.

"John!" she cried. "Have you forgotten we are married?"

CARL GLICK.



ILLUSTRATED BY
LAURA E. FOSTER

ONLY TEN MINUTES

by Winifred Arnold

Author of "A Small Town Adonis," the "Mrs. Radigan" stories, etc.

There are agonies and joys in this very true little story of married life.

HAVING been married for nearly two years, Mr. Willis R. Bond naturally felt that he knew all there was to know on the subject of "Woman." Every possible reef and shoal had been charted, and from now on his matrimonial bark would navigate only that straight and peaceful channel labeled "Safe and Sane." His morning newspaper was as much a part of his breakfast as his eggs and bacon; and Mrs. Willis took breakfast time to make out her order lists for the day, and was perfectly satisfied with one coffee-flavored kiss and a "By, dear. Probably be late for dinner to-night." And what happier arrangement could any man want than that?

But on a certain morning in January, little Mrs. Willis was feeling neither safe nor sane. She had a headache and a grippy cold; her breakfast tasted like sawdust and dark-brown ink; her new dress looked in the morning light as if it had been made by Miss Ardelia Simmons of Podunk; it was raining torrents, and—oh, everything! Everybody knows such mornings.

Very naturally, therefore, little Mrs. Willis wished to forget that she was a settled matron, with an enviable reputation for efficiency and common sense, and to have her particular somebody "make a fuss over" her—revert to honeymoon parlance, and tell her again

and again that she was the most precious thing in the whole world and that he didn't know how he had ever lived without her, and infuse such ardor into the accompanying kisses that she would entirely forget the coffee flavor. Just about ten minutes of such treatment, she thought, would restore her to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, at least until dinner time.

The training of those nearly two years had not been thrown away, however, so she merely sniffed resentfully at the back of the morning paper and waited for her ten minutes until both breakfast and the news of the day should have been safely disposed of. She even decided, with supreme unselfishness, that she would forbid Willis to kiss her. These colds were so contagious, and, after all, one of his good, old-timey bear hugs, with the proper accompanying remarks, would be medicine enough.

They would sit, she planned, on the green davenport in the living room and—

But just at that moment, Mr. Willis threw down his newspaper, drained his last drop of coffee, pushed back his chair, and jumped to his feet, all in one lithe, complex movement.

"By Jove!" he cried, pulling out his watch and comparing it with the dining-room clock. "I've just got time to make



"By Jove!" he cried, pulling out his watch and comparing it with the clock.

"I've got just time to make it by the skin of my teeth! Why can't the clocks in this house ever be reliable enough so that a man can depend on them?"

it by the skin of my teeth! Why can't the clocks in this house ever be reliable enough so that a man can depend on them?"

With another swift movement, he swung on his heel, and was already in the hall, topcoat in hand, before little Mrs. Willis could recover herself sufficiently to push back her own chair and dash after him.

By the time she reached him, he was shaking his coats into place with that combined overhand and underhand pull by which a man achieves a good "set" in the back. It was certainly neither the psychological, nor even the possible, moment for a heart-hungry wife to throw herself into her husband's arms.

Mrs. Willis, therefore, stood off at a discreet distance and watched her lord and master while he wriggled.

"Why are you in such a hurry to-day, dearie?" she questioned plaintively. "Don't get into your overcoat just yet. I want you to stop and talk to me a little while."

"Now look here, Floss." Mr. Bond gave himself a final wriggle and began to look around for the hat which his wife was secreting coquettishly behind her. "I'd like nothing better than to stop and talk to you all day—you know that. But that sort of thing doesn't pay any income taxes. Where in thunder is——"

"But, Billy!"—Mrs. Willis' poor little voice began to croak sadly—"you were off at that chamber-of-commerce dinner all last evening, and I feel so *horrid* this morning! I did think you might spare me just ten minutes or so for a little talk. I——"

"Ten minutes more!" Willis paused to chuck her jovially under the chin. "After we've just talked all breakfast time! Listen to the woman! Why, I shall be late for my appointment with Baker as it is. You women don't seem to realize the first thing about the importance of business!" Abruptly the

jovial, patronizing tone took on an impatient note. "Where in thunder is my hat?" he demanded. "Nothing in this house is ever left where I put it!"

"Here it is." With a gesture that was not at all coquettish, his wife extended the missing headgear. "I thought that possibly you could spare ten minutes for your wife once a day, but of course if you can't——" She evaded all but the merest sketch of the usual coffee-flavored kiss, and with head held high, turned swiftly away toward the living room.

She *wasn't* going to cry. Billy hated a weepy wife, and so did she. But certainly any loving husband, if he noticed how her voice had broken, and how dreadfully hoarse she was getting——

She paused on the threshold for the expected penitent rush of love's flying feet. But love's flying feet were busily engaged in kicking themselves into their rubbers.

"Ah, go on, Floss, don't be peevish!" said Willis' voice above the crackle of the newspaper that he was trying to thrust into a pocket several sizes too small for the way he had folded it. "You'll be glad enough to use a good, large slice of Baker's money when I get hold of it."

At the outside door, he paused another second.

"Better stay in to-day, hadn't you?" he called. "Sounds to me as if—— Gee, I'm late now! 'By! Good to yourself!" And the big front door slammed behind him like the crack o' doom.

At least so it seemed to the little woman who first whirled about to face its inexorableness and then flew to fling herself, a huddled, weeping heap, into the farthest recesses of the big, lonely davenport. Willis no longer loved her—that was sure. Certainly he would never have treated her like that when they were first married. How well she

remembered the day when she had wakened with just the wee-est scrap of a headache, and he had made her stay in bed while he got the breakfast himself and brought it to her! How she had loved that black, burned toast! And how she had had to *make* him go to the office that day!

And now—when she felt so *dreadful*—all he had said was, "Don't get peevish," and he wouldn't even give her ten little minutes! She wept again.

By and by, however, she sat up and tried to recollect who it was that

beholds it die away

And fade into the light of common day.

Some neglected wife, she felt sure, whose husband had ceased to love her. And having translated her woes, even by proxy, into the language of poetry, she began naturally to feel a little better.

And she was quite reveling in a swift and tragic death from pneumonia, and Willis' consequent remorse, when her meditations were interrupted by the maid's announcement that she was wanted on the telephone; also, that it was ten o'clock, and had she ordered yet?

With a shake of the head, she jumped up and ran.

"Oh, hello, Florence! This is Myrtie Smith," sounded a dulcet voice over the phone. "I just called up to ask which it was—a birthday or an anniversary?"

"What? I can hardly hear you."

"Why, because I saw Willis buying your present, of course. And he certainly spent a lot of time on it. What? Why, I take Tom down to the office mornings, since he gave me the electric, you know. And this morning I ran into Crippen's to choose Maisie Fowler's wedding present before the crowd got in, and there was Willis looking at lockets and things. And when I came downstairs half an hour later, he was just going out, and the clerks seemed to be

putting away nearly the whole stock——"

Desperately Mrs. Bond beckoned to the maid, who fortunately appeared in the offing just then.

"Tell her I'm so hoarse that I can't talk just now," she whispered, thrusting the receiver into the girl's hand. "Oh, and, Delia—tell her it's—er—Mr. Bond's—er—oldest sister's daughter's birthday to-morrow, and that I shan't be able to come to her Red Cross entertainment on account of my cold."

This done, she turned away toward her old refuge on the davenport and faced this real trouble with tearless eyes.

So this was the appointment with "Baker" from which Willis could not spare his sick wife even a paltry ten minutes! That was why he could not wait! Willis had lied to her—lied! And he was buying gifts for another woman! He loved another woman!

Over and over again those little sentences beat upon her incredulous brain like benumbing hammers, till it seemed as if her head would burst. Oh, how it ached! If he only hadn't lied! She could have borne anything else—even the other woman!

She was still sitting there when Delia came to announce lunch. Terrified by her mistress' scarlet cheeks and the dazed look in her suffering eyes, the maid flew at once to the telephone and summoned the old family physician.

"And he says ye're to go right to bed, ma'am," she announced, "and have something hot to drink and a hot-water bottle to your feet, and he'll be right over as soon as his office hours are done. Come on now, Mrs. Bond, dear, and I'll help you. There, there now, lean on Delia!"

It was good to be helped into the cool white bed by Delia's strong hands, good to drink the hot tea and feel the grateful warmth of the hot-water bottle on her aching back, better still to look into



Her eyes were apparently fixed upon the locket in her hand, but she was conscious of only two things in the whole joyful universe—Willis did love her, after all, and he hadn't lied to her!

the kindly face of old Doctor Talcott when he came a little later, and to hear his cheerful, hearty voice saying:

"Swallow that right down, Flossy, like a good girl. And now another. That's the idea. You'll be right as a trivet to-morrow. What? What? Want to weep a little on the old man's shoulder, eh? Go ahead, then. There—there. You used to sometimes when you were a little shaver, you know. Safety valve near the top. Did I tell you what the little Price girl said to me the other day?"

His kindly old hand patted her shoulder, and he talked on and on till she smiled, and then laughed once and again in spite of herself.

She listened regretfully to his ponderous footsteps as he lowered himself carefully down her polished stairs, talking jovially to Delia all the way. Now he was gone, she would have to think again, she supposed. Just for this little

time, she had forgotten that Willis had lied to her, that Willis—

But why was the doctor coming back again? And how did he dare to risk flying up those stairs like that? It sounded just like the way that Willis— Why, it *was* Willis—Willis at this hour of the day! Not more than four o'clock, was it? Why, it couldn't be!

But it was certainly Willis' arms that were gathering her up in the old-time bear hug and then remorsefully laying her down again on her pillows as if she were a very fragile piece of porcelain. It was certainly Willis' voice that was saying hoarsely:

"Why, Flossy darling, what's the matter? Delia scared me black and blue when she telephoned, and then, when I come, I see old Doc Talcott just driving off! What the deuce have you been doing with yourself, old lady? Didn't I tell you to be careful? You

promised to obey, you know, and I can't have my wife— Why, Floss—Floss—I don't know how—”

For one moment he pressed her wrists in his strong grip till she almost screamed with pain. Then she forgot all about it while her hungry heart feasted on the look in his eyes. He did love her, he must—or he couldn't look like that!

All at once he jumped to his feet like an embarrassed boy and began to search awkwardly in his pockets.

“Made such a Marathon for home,” he growled huskily, “that I almost forgot your present! After spending near an hour getting it this morning! Aren't too sick to look at it are you, old girl? Got it at Crippen's this morning.”

“Crippen's? Crippen's!” With a gasp, Florence Bond sat upright and stared at her husband. “But I thought you had an appointment,” she gasped, “with a Mr. Baker.”

“So I did. But it came over me on the way down that you didn't act very spruce this morning, and I thought you needed a little cheering up. And says I to myself, ‘Nothing like jewelry to do it for a woman.’ So off I dropped, telephoned the office to hold Baker, and got this.

“Here—look! I'll open it. Like it, eh, Flossy darling? I pretty near tore up the whole place by the roots before I got just the thing. Like it, eh, Flossy? Sure—I thought you would. Your Willis is some little picker-out, huh?”

He laid a little pearl-encrusted locket in her hand and stood off proudly to watch her as she looked at it.

Did she like it?

Through the waves of joy that were flooding over her, the question beat meaninglessly upon Florence Bond's ears. Her eyes were apparently fixed upon the locket in her hand, but she was conscious of only two things in the whole joyful universe—Willis did love her, after all, and he hadn't lied to her!

“Why, Floss”—there was a hurt tone now in Willis' happy, self-confident voice—“why don't you say something? Don't you like it? What's the matter?”

With an effort, she pulled herself together and focused her gaze upon the pretty trifle in hand.

“Matter?” she repeated. “Nothing, darling. I'm just so dazed—with joy—that's all. Like it? Why, Willis”—with one hand, she clasped the locket rapturously to her breast, with the other she reached up and pulled her husband's face down to her—“why, Willis, it's the most beautiful thing in the whole wide world!” Her voice choked into silence.

“Oh, I guess not quite that,” deprecated Willis' gratified voice. “Not quite that, but— Say, have you noticed the marking?” He released himself gently. “That's some marking, isn't it? I doped that out for the engraver myself. Here—let me slip it around your neck.

“Gee, Flossy, but you look fine! Wish old Doc Talcott could see you now. Wouldn't think you'd ever been sick in your life—eyes bright as dollars, cheeks as pink— Say, I'm the doctor, all right! Jewelry's the stuff that hits the women.

“That's what I said to Crippen this morning. ‘Jewelry's what the women want,’ I said. ‘Only it's got to be the right stuff. And this is going to be if I have to spend the whole morning to find it. This is no ten-minute job,’ said I.”

“No ten-minute job—no ten-minute job.” Across Florence Bond's mind there flashed again the memory of that tragic morning. Why, it was only ten minutes that she had asked for then—only ten minutes, but, oh, the hours of suffering they would have saved! And here he was talking about jewelry as if—

From the dainty trinket in her hand, she raised her eyes swiftly to her hus-

band's radiant, self-satisfied face. She *must* tell him how much, much more she would have cared for that ten minutes than for all the locket in the world. She half opened her lips, and then a feeling of mother compassion caught poignantly at her heart.

No, no, she could not bear to dim that happy, boyish look in his eyes; and, besides—could he ever possibly understand? For the first time in her life, she caught a glimpse of the eternal gulf that separates all mankind from even their dearest womankind.

So she merely extended her arms again with a radiant smile.

"Yes, darling," she cried, "you're the very best doctor in the whole wide

world! I'm going to be well enough to come down to dinner—and wear my lovely new locket and my very best gown to do it honor!"

Mr. Willis Bond, rising from the expected caress, stood back and laughed with his jovial, tolerant understanding of feminine weaknesses.

"Floss, old girl," he said, "you certainly are just like a woman! I vow you are!"

Little Mrs. Florence nodded sagely.

"I am," she said. "I decided that just a moment ago myself. Exactly as you, Willis dearest, are just like a man. And that's undoubtedly the reason we fell in love and married each other, isn't it?"



THE MEETING

(What each thought)

SHE: We meet again! How sweet to revive an old love! How handsome he is!

HE: Bygones are bygones. She used to be a pretty little thing.

SHE: My heart beats as it did on the night he first kissed me. They say he is rich.

HE: What a fool a boy is! Too bad she never married!

SHE: Shall I smile an assurance that the years have not changed my heart?

HE: Jove, I wish I had a smoke!

SHE: Cleopatra was forty-five when she enthralled Mark Antony.

HE: There comes my car, for once on time. It makes a man feel as if he ought to wake from a nightmare to meet these relics of "Love's early dream."

(What they said)

SHE: Can this be Harry? Harry Depew?

HE: And this Miss Sellers?

SHE: So glad to see you! And the years haven't changed you, unless your heart has— What? Your car so soon?

HE: My car? No, the corporation's. Good-by.



THE VELVET VOICE

by
Robert W. Sneddon

ILLUSTRATED BY E. A. FURMAN

On falling in love with a beautiful voice. A gay little tragedy.

PASSING through the covered Passage Jouffroy, we stopped in front of a music store and gazed at the gayly covered copies of popular songs. Prominent among them were several by my friend Charlot, who was with me, and I turned to him cheerfully.

"Well, you make a pretty good showing, my friend."

I was amazed to see an expression of profound disgust on the song writer's face.

"Look!" he said, pointing. "Look! What have my compositions done to be associated with a song like that?"

"Like what?" I peered into the window.

"Are your blind?" he asked me indignantly. "My songs may be anything you please—a trifle gay for your taste, perhaps—but at least the sentiment is honest. This vileness, however! Bah! My blood boils! Look! See there in the very center. Yes, they have dared to place it there! Read the title and tell me if I am wrong or not!"

Still bewildered by his outburst, I read the title aloud:

"'My Love, Thy Voice Makes Me Rejoice?'"

"Yes. That is the one, that is the rubbish I refer to! Can you imagine

what kind of a fool wrote it—ignorant, fatuous, blind? Blind! That may be the answer. Ah, if he had had my experience, he would not be soiling good paper with his 'My Love, Thy Voice Makes Me Rejoice!'"

"What is the idea, may I ask?" I questioned, for Charlot was scowling at the window, his fingers twitching on the handle of his cane. "If you intend to break the window, do so. It is nothing to me, but at least let me get a good start. I am not such a nimble runner as I once was. Only, I warn you that your expression has already alarmed the salesman, and he is very near the telephone, and if you will turn your head, you will observe a policeman who is regarding you with greedy interest as he mentally measures your wrists for the handcuffs. Better come along. Leave the public to avenge you."

Charlot hesitated; then, as I hooked my arm through his, shrugged his shoulders and walked off with me.

"You are right," he announced, as we emerged into the street, fortuitously near to an inviting café, "partially right. Only, it is not the public who will put this song writer in his place; it is the owner of this 'thy voice.' *Bon sang!* I could give him a few points on his

conduct, but why should I? He has deserved all that is coming to him."

"Sit down! Calm yourself!" I commanded, shoving him into a chair. "Two Dubonnet sec, if you please!" I confided to the waiter. "There is some mystery behind all this agitation, and as your friend, I am willing to let you unburden your aching heart of its woes. To begin with, tell me of the woman. As some one has said, the truth begins in the Garden of Eden and ends invariably in Revelations."

"I began even earlier," Charlot confessed, "in chaos—in darkness."

I groped in my mind for the explanation of this symbolism.

"In darkness, eh?"

Charlot nodded.

"In impenetrable darkness, with a cursed bandage over my eyes. It was this way: Owing to the misfortune that the dear public at that time did not agree with me on the merits of my songs, I was compelled to work like a dog copying musical scores. Sometimes I worked all night, for it is the habit of the good people who want such things to imagine that the full score of an opera can be turned out overnight without a blot, scrape, or incorrect note. And such music as I copied! *Hélas!*

"As I worked like a dog, naturally I had the ravenous appetite of a dog, and it needed payment for a good many pages to provide me with food. I worked for weeks at tension, my fingers numb, my eyes aching and tortured, and then one night—blackness. I was blind.

"You can imagine how gay I felt. It did not comfort me to recall how many musicians had been blind. It was terrible, this sudden darkness. I staggered across to the door and called out to my neighbor the other side of the hallway, a good fellow who was studying medicine, and he came running. *Eh bien!* I was transported to the eye hospital and put to bed. They had the

audacity to say that I was weak for want of nutrition, and such was my state of mind that I permitted them to say what I had never dared whisper to myself. In fact, I was as lean as——"

His eyes rested momentarily on me as if bent on a comparison, but I did not encourage him.

"Anyway, lean," he continued hastily. "And as I was informed by a kind doctor that my blindness would disappear in time, provided I rested in darkness and endeavored to eat—'endeavored to eat' were his very words—needless to say, I made every effort to profit by his advice.

"It was very comfortable in bed, but dismal. We are creatures of habit, we men, and it disturbed me not to know when it was night or day except by the arrival of my meals. There were three others in the little ward, and as we needed little attention, we were left much to ourselves. The nurses looked in once in a while, the doctor daily, and that was all. Cheerful, you say. You do not know what a pleasure reading is, what a necessity, till you have a bandage over your eyes. No cards! No anything! Nothing to do but lie on your back! True, I did compose innumerable songs which I hoped might see the light when I did."

"Which they did, of course!"

Charlot sighed.

"Yes. Yes. When I came out, I was penniless, so I sold the lot for a hundred francs, and one of them bought the publisher a fine touring car. But justice was done! He drove himself straight into bankruptcy.

"One day, however, I wakened up from a doze to hear a sound. *Dieu*, how melodiously soft, how tenderly gentle, how caressingly sympathetic! A woman's voice! Yes. She was talking to my neighbor. Naturally I was curious. A new nurse? What luck, for kind as our two nurses were, their

tongues were as rasping as files. I had almost determined upon a scheme to open an academy for the training of nurses' voices, with a course in tender sentiment, and here was a model ready made. And then what disappointment as I recognized that she was a visitor only!

"It is incredible, but when she read 'Paul and Virginia,' that venerable mess of sentimentality, it became the most wonderful romance in the world. Its twittering delicacy that I have laughed over would have brought tears to my eyes if they had not been bandaged. Had Bernardin de St. Pierre



"When she read 'Paul and Virginia,' that venerable mess of sentimentality, it became the most wonderful romance in the world."

"I listened. She had found, she was saying, that she had an hour to spare sometimes, so she had made up her mind to devote it to visiting our hospital. If she could read to us for a little, what pleasure for her!"

"'And for us a thousand times more,' I interjected eagerly. 'If you would be so kind! I am sure, from your voice, that you read superbly.'"

"'You think so? Well, you shall judge, my friends,' and she read.

come to life and announced himself in the ward, I would have saluted him as a greater author than the greatest of our moderns. Such was the charm of that voice. Surely I need say no more to convince you as a fellow author. I could hear the others sobbing, and then, with a soft 'Au revoir,' she left us. *Mon dieu!* My heart was ravished. I was passionately in love with her. I thought of kisses and embraces. I could have followed her on my hands

and knees but to have heard her say, 'I do not dislike you.'

"When the nurse came, I asked her eagerly for particulars of our visitor, but she was vague. Oh, a lady. Yes, she was well dressed. Looks? Oh, so so. Would she come again? She did not know. Her name? She called herself Raucourt. Madame or mademoiselle? Here she told me to go to sleep. It was not well for me to disturb myself with thoughts of love. As if Cupid was not blind! My word, I began to think mademoiselle the nurse was jealous!"

"Did she come again?" I asked.

"A week later. A week of agonized waiting! I knew her footstep, and at the first sound of her voice, I could have risen from my bed to throw myself at her feet, only the good people of the hospital had neglected to provide me with a costume suitable for such an occasion, and I did not wish to present myself before her in the preposterous sleeping garment I was wearing. As it was, I had to content myself with joining in with the chorus of greeting from the other patients.

"She read again, and I was just about to risk eternal blindness for the sake of one glimpse of her—yes, I was going to pluck the bandage from my eyes—when I heard her say, '*Dieu!* I shall be late again!' and she was gone. Angel of mercy, her passing flight through our purgatory was all too short.

"She did not come again, though I strained my ears each day for the faintest whisper. I was obsessed. I was madly in love with this divine voice. I promised myself that some day, somewhere, I should find its owner and declare the passion which she had kindled in me.

"Perhaps that passion hastened my recovery. Anyway, it is a fact that in three weeks I was discharged, though with orders to wear black glasses for a month longer. I was free to set out

upon my search. You speak of the quest of the Holy Grail, of the search for Eldorado. What were they but petty adventurings compared with my quest for this voice of— No, permit me to correct you. Not of gold, but of silk—of velvet.

"I had no clew to its owner. Nothing but the name—Raucourt. I searched the directory. There were sections of Raucourts, and to go to the door of each one and say, 'Pardon—may I see the ladies of your household?' would be to proclaim to the world that I was an imbecile, a secret I wished to keep to myself. Besides, it would be to invite a good kick, and I was still somewhat sore with so much reclining.

"Ah, what a sad time I had! As I walked along the streets, I kept my ears on the alert. One word in that voice as she passed through the crowd, and I should have known it, but it did not take me long to learn that the only voice heard above the rumbling of wheels, the tooting of horns, and the tread of many feet was that of the newspaper seller crying *La Patrie!* And in restaurants one sees lips moving, but no sound rises above the orchestra, if there is one, and if there is not, then the waiters and the cashier conspire with each other to render the quality of their tones known to the clientele."

"A regular wild-geese chase," I remarked indolently. "The sun was very warm upon the awning overhead.

"As you say—I being the wild goose. It is curious. Now, you would regard me as a man of sense, eh?"

He hung upon my words, and I had not the heart to set him right.

"Oh, surely," I murmured hastily. "None more sensible."

"Then it may seem strange to you that I had not thought of it before. I set my mind to conjuring up the reason for this angelic creature giving her time to four poor blind men."

"What conclusion did you come to?"

"She chose the blind to visit—for what reason, I ask you?"

"No idea. Have you?"

"Because she was a mysterious lady who wished to do good by stealth—a famous beauty of the demimonde whose face was on every post card, whose figure—who knows?—was displayed in the nude in publications for artists and collectors."

"Well, what better sight for sore eyes," I commented coarsely, for it seemed to me that it was time to administer some drastic corrective to the maudlin sentimentality from which Charlot was apparently suffering.

He disregarded my remark to continue:

"And naturally, *mon vieux*, the lady did not wish to be recognized. Or again——"

"Ah, there is an 'or.' Well, come to it."

"I am—as quickly as your interruptions will allow me. Or—the poor lady was of an ugliness that shrank from masculine eyes. Conceive, my dear fellow, this voice dwelling within a habitation which gave its owner a shudder of despair each time she looked at it in the mirror! Yet at the hospital the nurse had said she was 'so so.' That does not promise an ugliness of repulsion. A woman's ugliness which repels herself may at the same time be very fascinating to a man."

I shook my head sadly.

"Poor Charlot," I thought to myself, "you have a lot to learn! The woman who confesses her plainness to her friends does not acknowledge it to herself."

"As far as I can gather, then," I told him, however, "you were in love with an ideal."

"Oh, no!" he corrected me sharply. "With a woman, plain—perhaps ugly, if you will have it so—with a voice of——"

"Of velvet. Precisely. Still I fail

to see what all this has to do with your anger of the last half hour."

"If you knew women as I do," said Charlot solemnly, leaping to his last resource in the way of admonishment, "you would not speak so flippantly. Some day you must begin to study them and their influence upon the lives of all men—of all great men," he added without embarrassment.

"You must be a regular battlefield for feminine influences then. But go on. I know how it ended. You found her. She was as ugly as sin. You took one long look at her, threw up your hands, and fled, disillusioned again."

"You are wrong!" cried Charlot triumphantly. "She was as beautiful as her voice! A brunette. Ah, what a figure! And her eyes, how they flashed!"

"Like a beacon to lure poor mariners to their doom. Now I know why she chose the blind to visit. Very thoughtful of her. Still, the deaf would have been in as great danger from the siren. But tell me—you found her interesting, did you?"

"I found her," answered Charlot non-committally, "I found her in the manner of romances—unexpectedly, miraculously, as if guided to her by fate. I was walking one evening up the Boulevard Raspail. There are some very elegant apartments up there, and I had some idea of renting one at no distant date in the future when my fortune should be made. I was sanguine then, you see. I stopped in front of one and gazed longingly at its English bow windows. Suddenly my heart leaped to my mouth. I had heard her voice—faintly. It came from the open window of a ground apartment. She was there, my velvet-voiced one—there within a few feet of me! You can well imagine my joy, my breathless rapture. I had but to step forward, to cry through the window: 'Adored, I have found you at last!'"



"The flowerpots were beginning to fly. I saw one strike the gentleman and scatter earth all over the floor, while madame continued to pour out a flood of abuse."

"But you didn't," I suggested. "You rang the doorbell in the usual way, and when she came, you were so flabbergasted that you said you were the gasman come to examine the meter."

"Bah! Gasman! At that moment, I was ready to ask her to marry me if she were as black as coal. Nothing else mattered but her voice. To hear it whispering words of love in my ear—while I kept my eyes closed, if necessary; but that did not occur to me then. The voice, the voice of my dreams—that was all!

"I advanced to the window. My hand was on the metal grillwork which protected the bottom of the window from intruders passing by. And then I saw her, standing up in a ravishing

toilet, but *hélas*—she was not alone! Seated at a table was a little bald-headed man in a smoking jacket. He was evidently quite at home there. I hesitated. Who the devil could he be? Her father? *Eh bien*, I could persuade him. Another object of her mercy—a poor old uncle? No matter, at that crucial moment of my life. I was raising myself on my tiptoes when suddenly I heard loudly in those velvet tones:

"*Ah, bigre!* Whatever did I do to be afflicted with such an old camel of a husband? Listen, little serpent, another word from you and I will leave my five visiting cards on your map! If I have a lover, what then? You have ten mistresses. Shall I name them, trollops? So you don't like the sound

of my voice, eh? You are not like the blind men I read to!"

"And at that the little man screeched:

"*Sapristi!* I know! I know! It is he, the surgeon at the eye hospital! *Sacré nom!* I am—I am——"

"He stammered, and madame supplied the missing word."

"So her voice did not make you rejoice, eh?" I asked.

"Bah! The flowerpots were beginning to fly. I saw one strike the gentleman and scatter earth all over the floor, while madame continued to pour

out a flood of abuse, still in that voice. Ah, my friend, it is not the voice that matters; it is what it says. All at once she noticed me. A flowerpot flew through the air, and I jumped down and ran as fast as my legs could carry me. And you may believe me or not, but it is true," continued Charlot with impressive gravity, "I did not look at another woman for two whole——"

"Weeks?"

"Ah, *bon dieu*," he cried indignantly, "what do you think I am? An anchor-*ret*? Days, *mon vieux*, days!"



BUBBLES

I SPENT years in search of a woman who could laugh when I was gay, rest when I was weary, visit when I felt talkative, and when I was uncommunicative, keep silent. I thought that, when I found her, I would make her my wife, but now I know I shall never marry. A woman like that would be a fool, and I especially admire one with brains.

A woman means what she says at the time she says it, but a man says what he wants a woman to believe he means.

Adam has never been accused of telling fish stories, but he gave the world the greatest snake story ever published.

The sun has a prying eye, but the moon uncovers the most secrets.

Even an automobile can be driven with one hand, if the girl is pretty enough to nerve that hand to do its duty.

Men are natural builders. They even reconstruct shattered ideals.

The real fault with New Year resolutions is that so many of them are only gold-plated.

America sent over enough men to bridge the Atlantic, and we now have new neighbors.

There are times when a spiral of smoke from a friendly chimney is a fairer sight than a rainbow.

Death is not unkind to the world. Imagine our streets filled with nono-generians.

Men are better losers than women, but that may be because they have more experience.

Adam escaped some things. He didn't have to remember whether Mrs. Jones took her maiden name or her first husband's after her last divorce.



WHAT THE STARS SAY



by Madame Renée Lonquille

Would you know yourself—your character, your disposition, your traits, your lucky days? Would you know some of the things that are likely to happen to you in the future? If so, you will be interested in following each month Madame Lonquille's articles on Astrology.

TAURUS

BETWEEN April 20th and May 20th of any year, the Sun passes through the constellation or group of stars known as Taurus, the sign of the Bull, a negative, fixed, earthy sign. All persons born at this time have as their ruling planet Venus. They are usually short, but well set-up, with large features and a thick, short neck. They are slow, practical, often considered stubborn, but reliable and honest, and should hold responsible positions where conservative, patient methods are needed. They are a real storehouse of repressed energy, which they often spend in labor for others, very seldom being appreciated at all. Their friends and those whom they love are constantly receiving benefits with never a thought of gratitude or thanks. But very often the Taurus native is unfortunate in worldly matters, much as he craves ease and luxuries. It takes much provocation to start the Taurus native in a quarrel, but when he once does give vent, there is a terrible outburst that astonishes the unprepared.

Large necks and throats are a marked characteristic of this sign, and the natives very often make good singers, possessing also the superabundance of

vitality and force demanded by such a career. Their presence has something decidedly magnetic about it, and for people weak and lacking in vitality, Taurus natives are very beneficial associates. However, they are easily influenced by those around them and should make no important decision without first thinking the matter over alone. In most cases, the Taurus nature is essentially jealous, and often indulges in fits of rage, envy, and hatred. They make dangerous enemies, but, strange to say, good, reliable friends, and they can always be depended upon in times of need. Being so full of latent strength and vigor, they give help in abundance without ever seeming to deplete their own vitality in the least. Very often Taurus persons seem slow to accept new ideas and always wish to have the minutest details explained before setting to work, but when the plan or idea is once made clear, they can be relied upon to carry it out faithfully.

To get nearer the individual character, Taurus, like all the other signs, may be divided into three distinct periods, each period accentuating certain qualities of the Taurus group. The first types are those born during the last week in April, whose chief feature is

dutifulness, which may at times seem so slow as to be mistaken for stubbornness. People of this type will find it hard to fight against real laziness; their tendency will be often to shirk work and hunt for pleasure. They also make good connoisseurs of food and drink, and invariably seek cheerful, carefree companions to entertain them.

Those born in the first ten days of May are more likely to cultivate the qualities of economy, and make good housekeepers or traders, always being able to strike good bargains. But if this trait grows and becomes a habit, there is every fear that stinginess or meanness may develop. However, their good qualities are numerous. They have a natural gift for chemistry, and always practice as well as preach hygienic rules.

In the last ten days of Taurus, from the 10th to the 20th of May, are born the most favored types. They are the ones who understand how to distribute their wonderful energies to the best advantage. This is the type that manifests the superior qualities of the sign. Always doing good work for humanity's sake, they have not the least thought of gratitude, or even desire for it. They will succeed in life, however, by persistent, firm rules, which are self-taught. If they were born at noon or at midnight, fate will rule them more than others, but those born at some hour between midnight and sunrise are fortunate and will obtain much more in this world. Those born between sunset and midnight are unlucky and are liable to be very poor, or, if they do succeed in gaining anything, it will be lost in a short time. Either will or desire seems to govern all the natives of Taurus, and those who are morally developed make wonderful characters. On the other hand, those that give way to their desires are found among the unfortunates of the world, and many make derelicts of humanity.

There is a peculiar psychic side to the Taurus nature which is never developed unless the subjects have had some sad shock or experience to stir their feelings deeply.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE.

Essentially suspicious and distrustful, Taurus people sometimes make rather difficult marriage partners, and if a wife or husband is not carefully chosen, there are sure to be many quarrels and disagreements. The men of this type are hard to please in cooking, and are apt to develop the trait of thinking that nothing the wife does is right. Whereas the unfavorable traits of a Taurus wife will be harshness and precision, the desire to know every detail of the husband's life, and an abused and critical manner. But when the type is developed, and the best qualities manifest, Taurus wives will cater to their husbands in every way. They leave nothing to be desired in the way of cooking. Their households are run on an economical and business basis, and they make excellent mothers, quiet, patient, and understanding.

In the choice of partners for a Taurus person, those born under the sign Virgo, or between August 22nd and September 21st, are the best, and those born under the sign Capricorn, or between December 21st and January 19th, will prove congenial companions. But if a person be born in any sign of the Zodiac, and it is found by his map of birth that the Moon is situated in the sign Taurus, then the native with the Sun in Taurus can be fairly sure of a happy, congenial union with such a person, for they will be physically and temperamentally suited to each other.

EMPLOYMENT.

Their magnetic personalities often help Taurus persons to make successes as doctors or nurses, especially for people of a nervous temperament or those suffering from lack of vitality.

They also find most congenial occupations connected with the ground. As farmers, fruit growers, and florists, they can succeed where others, under the same circumstances, would fail utterly. In fact, they will always do well in occupations that need a steady quiet, persistent effort. It can be said of the Taureans, "Slow, but sure, wins the race." Women of Taurus, with their natural sense of what is best for health and frugality, make wonderful housekeepers, cooks, or nurses, and when they can overcome a tendency to be hypercritical, to expect too much, they are most successful.

People who handle large sums of money, financiers, and bank directors often find their home in this sign. Although the Taureans cannot be said to be inventive or given much to the deep study of science, they are nevertheless an essential factor in the working out and materialization of the original ideas of others.

DISEASES.

The constitution is invariably strong, and the health can be wonderful, but this sign is apt to bestow an overabundance of life and vitality against which most of the other signs do not have to guard. Therefore, if they do not lead lives of sober, moderate habits, and give an outlet to their pent-up energy, Taurus persons are liable to a sudden end from apoplexy, or to suffer from hardening of the arteries. This sign concentrates on the throat, and the subject of Taurus may often be troubled by colds or inflammations there, causing quinsy, diphtheria, or tonsilitis. Thus, for good health, they must not be overnourished or lazy, nor must they become secretive or reserved, but associate with others who will help them to throw off some of their superfluous personal magnetism, thereby doing good to others as well as receiving benefit themselves. At the ages of

eleven, twenty-three, and thirty-five, the Taurus person must be particularly careful of his health, and not overeat or overindulge himself in any way.

When the Taureans are young, the disposition is gay and full of fun, at the same time very gentle and serene. They are very agreeable companions and naturally attract many people by this sunny nature. But as life advances, there is a strong tendency to change, and they become morbid and disconsolate. If other planets do not help, there are indications of their being afflicted with melancholia.

CHILDREN.

The child born in Taurus must be treated in quite a different manner from those of other signs. Although he does not often seem as alert and quick witted as, for instance, an Aries child, he is sure to be just as clever and just as successful in his own particular way. His slow, indolent, obstinate disposition has its advantages, and he should not be pushed or driven, but coaxed and persuaded. Everything must be explained to him, for his inborn instinct is to want to understand before acting. The love of the Taurus child for digging in the ground should be encouraged, for he is showing his tendency to get good from the earth. A sympathetic teacher or parent who understands the weaknesses and strength of this sign can do much to develop the good qualities and suppress the unfavorable, and give the right start to the individual on the road to success.

PREDICTIVE.

A few things can be more or less accurately predicted for a person with the foregoing qualities. His ability to save and be economical will bring him more or less personal property, which other tendencies will cause him to spend on pleasure, and perhaps lawsuits, after he has acquired a certain amount.

However, sudden gifts from friends for whom he has done a good turn will be probable. If the native's birth occurred between the hours of midnight and noon, this points to a fortunate life for his father as a result of a talent or business ability. But near relatives are apt to cause Taurus natives a great deal of trouble. The serious loss of a sum of money may be expected. Much journeying is foretold, and the native might even go through great peril and danger on one particular voyage. Friends will amuse and entertain the subject, but they are not steadfast or true friends, and often most undesirable people cause disappointments and sad experiences to the Taurean. This constellation promises a long life, if natives understand themselves and live wisely.

FAMOUS PEOPLE BORN IN TAURUS.

General Grant is perhaps one of the best examples of the sign Taurus, which is strong, patient, able, with a wonderful power to act. General Boulanger was also born in Taurus, as was Oliver Cromwell, Robespierre, Shakespeare, Balzac, Kant, and Catherine de Medici.

The astral color is indigo. Natives should wear emeralds in their jewelry. If they wish to start any new enterprise, or make a change of any kind, they should choose Friday as the day most favorable for them.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

M. G. H.—Born May 8, 1902, seven p. m. St. Louis, Missouri. You were born with Cancer rising. The Sun, Mars, and Mercury were in Taurus in the eleventh house. This makes you rather a strong Taurus character. The Moon rules your life and is situated in Gemini, in the house of friends, well aspected by Mars. This position would indicate that you are a very capable, enterprising person, at times very loyal and brave where your friends are concerned. You are rather slow to decide on any questions that may arise, but once your mind is made up, you are inflexible.

Madame Lonquille regrets that it is impossible to send to the many who ask a free, individual horoscope reading by mail. Do not send a stamped envelope with a request of this sort.

You are probably very fond of money, and there are indications of acquiring a good position in the world through an influential friend. You are blessed with a good memory, as the Sun in Taurus would indicate alone, but this is strengthened by the fact that Mercury, the planet of the mind and memory, is also poised in Taurus.

Mars in the house of friends in Taurus would indicate a loss of honor or an unpleasant experience with a friend, who might turn into an opponent. But Venus in the tenth house will help you wonderfully. You could develop a talent of some kind, as for instance, music, poetry, or painting, but little application along these lines is indicated so far. Venus in this position also gives you a strong desire to have everything you do admired, but not much patience with conventionalities.

The planet Jupiter is in Aquarius. All along, there are indications of wonderfully helpful friends who will always stand by you. Here again is an indication of good friends, and at some time in life, a small legacy will surprise you. Saturn in Capricorn, strong in the seventh house, is rather opposed to marriage, and so would delay it, or cause your future husband to be of rather a saturnine type, or perhaps a widower with a great deal of this world's goods. Notwithstanding, it is a real love match. This position is bad for any lawsuits or partnerships into which you might be drawn at some time later in life.

Uranus gives you imagination and very good, sound views on religion. Coming in the sixth house, it foretells trouble with inferior people. There also might be something about your health that cannot be remedied.

Neptune, the planet of mystery, in the twelfth house, would foretell success coming to you through occult or secret societies.

The Moon, by her secondary motion, is passing this year of 1919 through your house of love and marriage, but makes no aspects until about the latter part of next October, and it is evil, causing you distress and sorrow; but immediately comes a good aspect of Mars from the house of friends, so you will be helped over this period. About the last of July, 1920, the Moon will probably come into conjunction with Saturn. At this time you might feel despondent, and you should guard your health. All this time you will be helped greatly by a good faithful friend.

FALSE COLORS

by
Edwina Levin

Author of "He Never Lied to His Wife,"
"Happiness à la Mode," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF



A story of the stage, tense and thrilling in its situations, told by a girl who has been an actress herself.

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED.

Pauline Stevens, a young actress out of a job, is sitting in her room, moneyless and desperate, when she hears her next-door neighbors discussing a bit of theatrical news. Laura Figlan, the famous Norwegian, whose big London success is to open shortly in New York, has cabled her producer, Gossman, that she has just married and will not appear in the American production. Gossman is wild, as he has spent a small fortune on the play and has been rehearsing the cast all summer. Pauline has always known of her striking resemblance to Laura and has modeled her acting upon that of the star. Now the idea comes to her to go to Gossman and see whether he will not take her as a substitute for Laura. To her amazement, she is welcomed at Gossman's office as the real Figlan. Stunned as she is, she keeps her head and does not give herself away, intending to confess her true identity after she has made good in Laura's part. Only one member of the American cast—old Alice Nestor—knows Laura, and even she is not sure that Pauline is an impostor. During the hectic days that follow, Pauline, partly by nerve, partly by sheer luck, surmounts the apparently insuperable difficulties that arise. She succeeds, also, in capturing the heart of young Lieutenant Lewis, who drops in at rehearsal to renew a slight acquaintance with Miss Figlan, and who, in spite of his knowledge of the star's notorious reputation, is charmed by her now. On the opening night, Pauline, wild with nervousness, is dressing when a shrill voice outside demands admittance, and a little woman bursts in, to stand petrified with surprise at the sight of Pauline.

CHAPTER IX.

FOR a moment that seemed a century for Pauline Stevens—a century packed with horror and despair—she stood looking into the face of the little dark woman who had burst into her dressing room with violent evidence of affection for Laura Figlan. And the gray-green eyes of the woman stared back at her amazed, almost terrified, as if she doubted her senses. The overture was almost finished.

"How are you?" Pauline said wanly.

She felt that the very world had come to an end. The watching woman's green eyes glittered with keen, malicious devilry. A faint smile parted the straight mouth that seemed very full of white, even teeth.

The orchestra crashed into silence.

"First act!" cried the stage manager.

There came a knock on Pauline's door, and Gossman's voice sounded outside.

The story began in the May number of SMITH'S.

"Everything all right, girly?" he asked.

"Yes, thank you," she replied faintly. The little woman turned joyously.

"Oh, it's Mr. Gossman!" She opened the door and fell upon him instantly, grasping both his hands. "My, but I'm glad to see you!" she cried. "Takes me back!"

Pauline swayed dizzily. Her vision blurred. So this woman knew Gossman, and he would know that she was not an impostor!

"Don't say you've forgotten me!" the little woman was exclaiming. "Doris Clayton. I played *Midge* in the London production. I met you several times. Don't you recollect that wild party we had on New Year's Eve night in Laura's hotel?"

"Oh, yes," replied Gossman. But it came to Pauline in a deluge of relief that either he didn't recognize her at all or that he did not like her.

"I see you're cross with me!" cried Miss Clayton. "I know it's a first night, and I oughtn't to have come over, but I was so crazy to see my old honey here, and I knew she wouldn't mind." To Pauline's unutterable surprise, Doris flashed around and tucked an arm through Pauline's, at the same time leaning her head against the actress' shoulder in a kittenish fashion. "You aren't peeved at me, Lolly, even if he is?" She turned her keen little face upward with affected babyishness.

If Pauline had been astonished before, she was completely bewildered now. What did it mean? Was Doris Clayton really deceived, as Gossman and Dotson and Lewis had been, or did she see that Pauline held the whip hand—that Gossman did not know her, and would simply have her put out of the theater should she start anything?

Then Gossman said an astonishing thing:

"Why, Beth Glendenning played *Midge*."

"She originated it, but I followed her in the part. I was in rehearsal when I met you at the party. Wasn't I, Lolly?" She appealed to Pauline.

"I don't recollect. I must get out on the stage," said Pauline, panic in her voice. "Céleste, where is my fan?" She broke away from Doris' affectionate arm.

"In your hand, madam," replied the maid calmly.

Gossman reached out and gave her a warm handclasp.

"Good luck, girly," he said and went heavily out front, without taking further notice of Doris.

Pauline hurried toward her entrance. On the way, she passed the leading man, who stood waiting his cue. She stopped.

"Good luck!" they both whispered in the same breath, shaking hands, and the next moment he strolled on to the stage. The two old ladies and Miss Dewey were playing the opening scene.

Dotson came rushing up to Pauline just as she started to mount the steps that led to the high, small platform from which she would make her entrance down the grand stairway.

"Came to wish you good luck, child," he said. "So busy I couldn't get here before. House is packed." He pressed her hand.

The two character men and the juvenile passed her, all exchanging "good luck." Then Dotson helped her up the steps and went out front.

Pauline's cue was drawing near. Her nerves were a-quiver, her breath came thickly as if she had been running. Just four speeches before her entrance, Doris Clayton, in complete violation of stage ethics, even under normal conditions, came up the steps, crowding Pauline on the small, dizzy space, and began to chat conversationally. Then Pauline knew that the woman meant mischief. Nothing else could have explained this action; not only that, but she meant to play with her victim—

torture her as does a cat before devouring a poor mouse. The strain of all this was driving the girl mad. She turned to Doris with a sort of aching tensity.

"Please, please!" she cried. "Go away, for God's sake!"

Then her cue came. The woman beside her was forgotten. Her slim, rigid form fell into easy lines, and with bored nonchalance, she stepped into view of the audience. There was a perfect storm of applause as she hesitated in the doorway for just a fraction of a second, a creature of pale flame against the soft gray of the set, her hair piled like a golden crown on her small head. The applause grew and grew as she made a slow, languorous descent, her big, somber eyes seeming not to see the hundreds of admiring faces out there, but resting insolently on her fellow players. At the foot of the stairway, she paused, one white hand on the balustrade, the other gently swaying a big fan of golden ostrich feathers. Her white shoulders drooped in the bored fashion of the great Figlan and her rounded arms and slim hands appeared fascinatingly above the pale, cloudy flames that seemed to envelop her tall, willowy form and to leap hungrily upward toward the beautiful head. A tulle scarf, twisted about one arm and drawn across the opposite shoulder, added to the effect, as if one flaming tongue were already reaching for the white throat.

Even the bored first-nighters sat up in delighted admiration. Certainly Laura Figlan knew how to achieve startling effects, for Pauline's gown was an exact duplicate of the one worn by the Norwegian in the London production.

The applause continued until Pauline and the leading man stopped it by pantomime, as if they were carrying on the play and the audience was missing it. When quiet came, Pauline, who had not once spoken her lines above a monotone

at rehearsal, read her first speech too low. The leading man, forced to take her tone or seem out of key, read his line in the same way. Both missed fire, as did some two or three speeches following. There was a clearing of throats in the auditorium.

Pauline raised her tone as much as she dared. To have done so too abruptly would have been to acknowledge that she had made a mistake and was trying to rectify it. The leading man came to her aid at once, and together they artfully lifted the scene. But still she was too subdued—almost without life. High nervous tension often has the effect of making the actor too calm to outward appearance, the result of which is underacting, and Pauline's terrific emotions were making her appear too placid.

Gossman and Dotson, standing at the very back of the theater, heard the slight restlessness of the audience, and they, too, moved uneasily.

"She's too *piano*," whispered Gossman.

Dotson did not speak.

On went the act. Other characters came in, and, taking the low key from Pauline and her leading man, lost the zip with which they had started. They all, including Pauline, who knew what was happening, made desperate efforts to pull the act up, but it was gone. Slowly, surely, it kept dropping. Gossman went outside. Dotson watched it to the fall of the curtain, puzzled and distressed.

There was vociferous applause, but it had a hollow sound. It was merely a slapping of hands instead of the impulsive handclapping of enthusiastic folk who have been wafted out of age's realities to a childhood's fairyland by the magic wand of delight.

Pauline went to her dressing room almost in a state of collapse. And there, perched on her trunk, sat the little dark-haired, green-eyed woman.

"You aren't mad at me, Lolly, are you?" she exclaimed in her coaxing way, as Pauline rushed in. "I didn't dream you'd be nervous, or you know I wouldn't have done it for the world."

"It's all right," said Pauline thickly, the while she began taking the pins from her hair, and the maid, without pause, after closing the dressing-room door, started to unhook her mistress' gown.

"Why, dearest," cut in Doris, her green eyes glittering, "it isn't one bit like you to be nervous!" Her voice was hard, flat, and sneering for all her honeyed words. "'Member how we used to talk right up to your cue, and once you missed it completely? You weren't worried."

Pauline did not answer.

To the audience, sitting impatiently on the other side of the curtain, seven to ten minutes seems a long time to wait between acts, and yet perhaps not a woman out there could comb her hair in the time it takes the women behind the scenes to make a complete change from head to foot. But it is a nerve-destroying business, and on a first night, with intricate and unaccustomed fastenings, the need for haste, and the many things that must be recollected, it is hideous.

Hands hurrying, body yielding, turning to C  ste's every need, eyes missing no smallest detail of make-up or costume, her conscious mind busy with her performance past and present, her subconscious mind torn by fears, Pauline suffered Doris Clayton. Cigarette in her mouth, eyes narrowed, Doris looked on and chattered incessantly, referring to various folk in London whom Pauline was supposed to know, delivering messages from this one and that, laughing over past incidents in which she and Laura had participated. Her voice had the high pitch so common to small women of her type, and it fell on Pauline's raw nerves like the rasping

of a grindstone on tempered steel. But she set her teeth in grim endurance.

The one thought in her mind that went round and round, hammering at her temples, was that she was not playing her part! She was not making good! She had three more acts in which to redeem herself, but instead of having the audience with her, as she had had at the start, she now had that most difficult thing to do—win it back when estranged.

"Second act," called the stage manager.

In exactly seven minutes, the curtain had risen, and Pauline walked out as if ready for the street. She walked out without a word to the woman who sat in her room, determined, for reasons of her own, not to notice her coolness or to take offense.

Everybody tried to pick up the second act, but the restlessness across the footlights told them that the audience was not greatly interested. In consequence, the supersensitive actors were chilled and discouraged, making it difficult beyond words for them.

Pauline came on. She made a determined effort to lift the scene and succeeded surprisingly. But still it lacked the fire engendered by a sympathetic audience. She was growing frantic. She had to get that act into proper swing before the big third act or it would never go over, and both she and the play would fail irretrievably.

Gossman was fuming under his breath to Dotson.

"What in God's name is the matter with her?" he said. "Do you suppose she's been boozing up to-day?"

Dotson shook his head. Beside them stood Lieutenant Lewis, his face white and strained. All unknown to Pauline, he was enduring the agony of that performance with her. At the first sight of her as a beautiful creature of flame at the head of the grand stairway, the passion that he had been trying so

hard to smother leaped up, a flame to envelop him, even as it seemed to envelop her.

CHAPTER X.

On and on went the act, everybody fighting desperately and recovering by inches, but with small hope of getting into proper position for the big third act. The curtain fell almost on silence. One of the critics got up and went out, to come back no more. Gossman was frantic. He was restrained by Dotson from going back stage.

"Somehow I feel that she's simply tricking us," Dotson said, "that she's going to show us in this next act."

Laura Figlan was a great actress. London had said so; America had confirmed the verdict five years before. She had just completed a long, successful engagement in London. It was impossible that she should fail.

In her dressing room, Pauline was on the ragged edge of hysterics. She had lost. She could never get them back now. It was finished—her great fight. It must inevitably come out—the story of a feeble little stock actress who had dared to try to impose on the public as a great artist!

"Here, Lolly," Doris Clayton was saying. "I sent out for a couple of tall



With a wild cry, she flung the weapon from her and backed away.

ones." She held a glass toward the wretched girl.

"Take it away!" said Pauline hoarsely. "I don't drink."

"Since when doesn't Laura Figlan drink?" smiled the woman, a sneer in her voice and eyes.

"I—mean—I've quit," replied Pauline, hardly knowing what she said.

Miss Clayton threw her head back and laughed as at a great joke, but her green eyes glittered. She lighted a cigarette, and while Pauline changed to the wonderful green jade gown with

slippers and stockings to match, Doris tucked her feet up on the trunk, sipped her drink, and blew smoke in Pauline's direction. The little room grew thick. Pauline began to clear her throat. She put on her jade necklace, a jade bracelet circled her white arm, and her heavy gold hair was coiled low on her neck and held in place by a dagger with an exquisite jade handle. That the effect was marvelously beautiful none could deny. Truly the great Figlan knew how to dress. And Pauline Stevens knew how to wear her clothes. But how insipid, how altogether disgusting was this if she could not act!

Well, she would not go on the road again or in small stocks. After tonight, she would never act again. She would go back to San Antonio! That was where she belonged. Then, like an icy hand on her heart, came the thought of Lieutenant Lewis. She had been too engrossed in the cyclone of her emotions to think of him since she had bent over his roses. And he was out there witnessing her failure! Oh, God! Surely the fiends who had tempted her to do this thing were sparing her nothing.

The air grew thicker with smoke. She coughed, and her throat felt raw. Her voice would be gone before she reached the great climax where she would need all the voice she possessed.

She made a big swallow of the highball that stood on her make-up shelf. For all her five years on the stage, she had never before tasted alcohol. The action was in response to the demand of her dry throat for a drink—any kind of a drink. Then, like a shot out of the dark, came the memory of San Antonio. She had sworn, on the day of her leaving, that whatever came to her, she would never do just this. Wracked by the recollection and its attendant memories, deviled by the flow of high-pitched, irrelevant talk—irrelevant to her performance, but all too

relevant to her personally, for it is one thing to confess and explain what may then seem a misdemeanor, and quite another to be exposed as an impostor—stricken by her failure, Pauline was almost insane. Everything became vague, unreal.

"Oh, Lolly," came the honeyed voice, "you didn't wear your hair——"

Without warning, Pauline turned on her tormentor. All her pent-up shame and despair burst into life and sought surcease in physical action. She flung her arms over her head in a sort of abandonment of rage; then, like a flash, made for the woman who had played so great a part in bringing her to this pass. Doris jumped off the trunk in alarm, and Céleste tried to come between them. But Pauline brushed the maid aside, and her strong white hands fell on the silk-clad shoulders of the other woman and dug viciously into them.

"I don't care what else you do!" Pauline whispered fiercely. "You're going to get out of my dressing room and stay out!"

Doris cried out in pain, but Pauline, her teeth set, her face white, whirled her tormentor about and pushed her through the door that Céleste already held open.

"And stay out!" hissed Pauline, sending Doris out on the stage with such violence that she bumped into a screen the astonished property boy was carrying, and they both went down.

Pauline turned back into her room and slammed the door, shaking in every part of her. The maid wisely kept silent and fastened a last hook.

"Third act," called the stage manager, and the company took their places in the various entrances.

Pauline, absolutely aquiver, opened the act. She had not spoken a dozen lines before the power of her terrific emotions went over the footlights. The bored audience sensed the storm that

hovered over the woman, threatening to burst out at any minute and overwhelm them. As a matter of fact, every muscle in her body ached for a violent outbreak. She held herself in check by a fierce exercise of will that could not control the raging fire within. Her voice, her gestures were like heavy waters dashing against a great dam that might break at any minute, and her eyes were scorching coals. She took possession of the act as if it were a live thing that she could throttle into submission to her will. Her fellow players, sensitive to the last degree, caught the elemental spirit of power suppressed, but not controlled, and the "death watch" sat up. Even the critics were swept along so that they forgot to wonder at this curious method of dawdling for two acts, then fairly storming the fortress.

Lewis breathed a great sigh of relief, and Dotson smiled in self-satisfaction. He had guessed right. What a great woman she was! While the first-nights so far forgot themselves as to weep, Gossman stood back in the parterre and grinned broadly. He rubbed his hands together as if already feeling the thousands that this Norwegian would be pulling into the box office.

"You thought she was falling down, didn't you?" he whispered to Dotson, as if such an idea had not once entered his own head. "Some little actress, eh?"

"Only a great artist, perfectly certain of herself, would have dared such a thing," Dotson replied. "Hear them!" He nodded toward the sniffing audience. "They don't realize that she has tricked them."

Even the actors were swept off their feet. They whispered together off stage, but they rendered able aid when the beautiful woman of the play learns

At last came the great moment when on. Pauline had not a single exit during this act. that her lover, who has introduced her

as his wife, is calmly preparing to desert her. She has occupied an honorable position in society for years; then he has fallen in love with a young girl, has told her the truth, and she has accepted him, neither of them giving a thought to the woman they will humiliate and disgrace. After a scene in which the mistress pleads piteously with him, there comes a sudden change. The loving, pleading, humbled woman becomes a wild creature, bent on killing for self-preservation.

Pauline read the speech magnificently, her beautiful contralto voice passionate, powerful, thrilling. She snatched the jade-handled dagger from her coil, which now fell in a shining rope down her back. Her arm was upraised when a movement in the wings caught her attention. Her eyes wavered in that direction—and there stood Doris Clayton, a sneering smile in her gray-green eyes.

It is a rule of the theater, more rigid than law, that stage folk shall not disconcert a player by standing in the wings during a performance. It distracts the player's attention from the scene and brings him to a consciousness of self as an audience can not do. He feels the element of criticism in his fellow players' regard. He knows they are not carried along by the play, but are viewing him, measuring him by his every move and tone. He naturally loses his hold on the character and becomes himself. Especially is it taboo to watch a "big scene" from the wings, when the least false note may turn drama to hysteria, sentiment to maudlin drivel. The most powerful exclamation on the stage is the single word, "God!" It is also the easiest to voice an undesired laugh. The most delightful line in the hero's mouth is, "I love you." It may also be the silliest. And so, where the barest shade of tone or gesture may tip the scales the wrong way in big moments, an actor dare not

let the smallest fraction of his attention get away. This is true no matter how long he may play the part, if he be sincere; it is overwhelmingly true on a first night, when the least thing may break him.

And so, when Doris Clayton appeared in the wings at the most critical moment of the play, not only did she cause Pauline's attention to wander, but Pauline knew it had been done with deliberate intent. This took her mind completely off the scene—even off the play—and focused it on her personal problem and the fact that the woman in the wings was bent on ruining her. In a flash, she was seized by that most terrifying and hideous thing which every seasoned actor experiences at one time or another—stage fright.

She absolutely did not know what to do next. The pause was becoming oppressive. The leading man had seen her wandering attention and knew without looking that somebody was in the wings. He saw in her eyes the panic that followed and his expressive face showed a like expression. Pauline read accurately his understanding, and the sight drove her mad. In that moment, there came to this delicate girl the old elemental impulse to destroy the thing that was destroying her. All at once she was conscious of the dagger in her hand. Her vision blurred. Her eyes were on the leading man's face now, but a peevish dark face with gray-green eyes was before her, a sneering, thin-lipped smile that showed a mouth overfull of white teeth maddened her. There were just herself and that woman in all the world.

"You snake!" she screamed, advancing on the man. "Destroy me, will you?"

Her breath came in gasps. The words were not of the play, but the leading man fell back. She was wonderful. What mattered the words? Inspired by her expression of demo-

niacal vengeance, his own eyes reflected sudden unutterable terror. He lifted a hand as if to ward off the blow.

The movement waked Pauline. Something clicked in her head. Horror gripped her. An instant more and she would have murdered her leading man right there in full view of the audience. Instead of plunging that dagger under his left arm, which was upstage away from the audience, she would in one moment more have plunged it to its hilt in his breast.

With a wild cry, she flung the weapon from her and backed away.

The leading man's amazed look caught her up short. She had flung away the dagger! She had ruined the climax of the play! Even the curtain could not come down, the cue being the fall of the leading man and her own insane laugh over her deed. The last act could not be played. It was her trial scene for the murder of the man she could not kill because she had disarmed herself!

Gossman, standing in the parterre, went wild for the instant.

"Good God!" he whispered. "What did she do that for? She's killed the act! She's ruined the play!"

Even Dotson, who had such unbounded faith in her, went out of the theater by a side door, and ran like a madman up the alley and back stage to get the curtain down before the act should die completely. She had played marvelously. The throwing away of the dagger might appear an act of renunciation, but weak! And then there was that last act. But whatever happened, the curtain must come down at once. The audience sat tensely waiting. That this was not the end, they knew. It was a big moment, a tense moment, but unfinished. The leading man, confused, not knowing what to do next, did the natural thing—he started for the dagger.

Pauline, in full horror of what she

had done, saw his start, understood, and jumped for it, too. They reached it at exactly the same moment. She got her hand on it first. They rose together, and she plunged it to the hilt under his out-held arm, completely justified! Then, with hands flung in the air as he fell, she gave a scream of unutterable triumph, turned her face to the audience, and broke into the insane laughter of the woman in the play.

The "death watch," swept out of its boredom, stood up. It was the greatest piece of acting that had been seen on a New York stage in years.

CHAPTER XI.

Pauline was taking her fourth bow when Dotson reached the wings. Gossman applauded till his fat hands were sore, and it was for the actress, not the box office, which he had completely forgotten for the first time in his life. Pauline took fifteen curtains and was compelled to make a little speech of thanks.

Dotson didn't know what had happened, but he caught her in his arms as the curtain fell for the last time, and there were tears in his eyes. The whole company hugged her in turn, including Gossman, who had hurried back stage. Lieutenant Lewis, had followed him, and he watched this curious, exuberant joy of a highly emotional people and saw what, had he merely heard of it, he would not have believed in—that there was, in all this demonstration, exactly the same feeling expressed on the part of the men and the women, no more, no less. She was a great artist, a sovereign queen. The women laughed and cried with her, all but Doris Clayton. Doris sat on a pile of rugs in a dark corner some distance away, watching Pauline's triumph. In her glittering gray-green eyes was a look of defeat. She knew that her word would be of no account after such acting.

"You didn't play that scene like that when I saw you in London," Gossman cried. "That business of throwing the dagger away, and then killing him after all in pure self-defense, is great! It fairly took my breath away!"

"Why didn't you tell me?" asked the leading man. "I might have killed it for you."

"I knew I could trust you," smiled Pauline. "Besides, I put that business in to-night for the first time."

"Well, keep it in for God's sake!" enjoined Gossman heartily.

"You mean for the box office's sake," grinned Lieutenant Lewis, who had stood on the outer edge of the circle. "And if you've all finished hugging Miss Figlan, I'd like to—shake her hand."

That broke up the celebration. With general laughter, they scattered, hurrying to their dressing rooms. The last act had to be played.

Lewis and Pauline were left standing together. He took her hand in both of his, and as her great Spanish eyes were lifted to his own, he had a sudden mad impulse to sweep her into his arms and crush her to him. All his doubts of her, his determination to leave her alone, were forgotten. He loved her! His racing pulses, his thickly drawn breath, proclaimed it. And looking down at her standing so near him, he saw her beautiful white bosom rise and fall heavily, unevenly, above the low line of the jade evening gown.

"You are wonderful!" he said hoarsely.

"I'm glad," she replied, so faintly that he scarcely heard.

His muscles ached for her, his lips burned as with fire, and his eyes lingered on her exquisite mouth. Unconsciously he drew her nearer—unconsciously she yielded.

"Madame," came the voice of Célèste, "ze next act, he will begin to start soon, and you will not be ready."

With a little embarrassed laugh, they fell apart, and Pauline hurried away to make her change. Her heart was pounding tumultuously. She wanted to scream it aloud. She had succeeded! And he cared! What more in all life, here or hereafter, could woman want? Oh, the overwhelming joy of it! Either was enough for one woman, but both!

Farewell, old road! Farewell, San Antonio!

Presently she fell to wondering what had become of her tormentor. As if in answer to her thought, there was a light tap on her door and, without waiting for a response, Doris pushed it open and stuck her head in.

"Lolly, you were wonderful!" she cried with a naive smile. "I just couldn't keep from watching you! You know I always did watch that scene. You were simply magnificent! But I don't believe you are a bit glad to see your poor Dodo." She pouted babyishly.

At first sight of her, Pauline again felt that wild impulse to do violence; then, in a blinding flash, it came to her that, in trying to destroy her, Doris Clayton had made her. The very torture to which she had been subjected had lifted her out of all the fears of a big part on a first night and had swept her on a storm through the great emotional exactions put upon her and up to a magnificent climax such as perhaps Figlan herself would not have dared. Like a victorious general facing a fallen foe, Pauline's anger died, and she smiled with unconscious patronage.

"Good-by, my poor Dodo," she said. Let her tell anything she pleased! Who would believe her now? "I really am too busy to talk with you to-night."

"I was just going to say good-by, anyway," said Doris, her smile a little too wide, a little too fixed. "I'm leaving in the morning on an early train for Los Angeles, to go in pictures. That's what I came over for. I have a won-

derful contract. Expect to be gone a year."

"That's fine," said Pauline heartily, and Céleste wondered whether her mistress meant that the contract or the "gone a year" was fine.

"I hope you'll be in better temper next time I see you, old dear," said Doris.

"I hope so," replied Pauline, opening the door. "If you'll excuse me, the act has begun."

Doris Clayton moved aside as Pauline passed her without further farewell. For a moment she stood watching Pauline's triumphant progress toward the wings. A derisive smile widened her thin lips, her green eyes glittered ominously, and she went out into the night.

As the door closed gently behind her, Alice Nestor made an exit from the stage and climbed upstairs to her dressing room. She would not have another entrance until near the end of the act.

"I'm a fool," muttered the old woman, sitting down in front of her make-up shelf. She stared unseeingly at her grim visage in the mirror. "Of course she's Fay McMillan! Let the whole play go to smash for two acts, set everybody crazy, then, when we were ready to quit, fairly snapped her fingers in our faces as if to say: 'Now I'll show you how great an actress Laura Figlan is!' My Lord, but that woman is a devil! Hasn't changed a bit in any way. She always could act, though," she finished, as if this covered a multitude of sins.

Fifteen years and not a day older. It didn't seem reasonable. The fast life she had lived and— There was a difference, though. Miss Nestor couldn't tell what it was, but—it was there. Looks and voice and mannerisms all the same, but— What was it?

Absently Miss Nestor reached for one of a number of congratulatory telegrams received before the performance.



Lewis fell into step with Pauline and held himself, by a fierce exercise of will, from smothering her against his breast.

This one was a little apart from the others. She opened it, and her face softened, while into her old yellow eyes there came a warm glow as she read:

Congratulations and good luck to mother,
from
JOHN.

It wasn't much—any of the other dozen or two telegrams beside her cold-cream box were couched as warmly—but, to her, this seemed the very acme

of loving tenderness. That this son of hers, a young man of twenty-four, was a ne'er-do-well, she did not dream. He was unfortunate. Folks imposed on him, lied about him. She had been compelled not only to furnish the money for his keep, but to get him out of various and sundry scrapes, each of which was the fault of some wild or malicious companion. Often she had helped the companion, too.

It had kept her living in a cheap rooming house and eating at the automat and the dairy lunches, while she worked steadily, earning a fat salary. But he was only a boy—and a good boy to his mother, thoughtful and tender. She read his brief words over and over and injected into them all the love of her stern old heart. Widowed while in her early twenties, she had never married again, but had gone along measuring all men to their everlasting discredit by her dead husband, whom she had loved with the single-heartedness of women of her type. The boy had his father's face and sunny smile. She had asked no more of life than to raise and educate him properly. That was all her profession had meant to her. John had been expelled from Princeton for no fault of his, two months before graduation. It had hurt her, but he had reminded her that he had as much education as if he had finished, and she had let it pass out of her mind.

Now here was his telegram proving that he never forgot her.

A burst of applause from the front of the theater told her that Pauline Stevens was holding that great audience in the hollow of her white hand.

"It couldn't be anybody else but Laura Figlan," Miss Nestor mused. "Nobody else would have dared do such an outrageous trick."

She rose and smoothed down her gray silk frock, adjusted her hat, and started downstairs preparatory to her next and last entrance. The play was almost over. A big success! That meant a long run in New York. She would get John that new gold wrist watch he wanted. Poor boy, he did have a hard time.

Again there came a round of applause.

"Looks like she'd forget *some* time," mused Miss Nestor. "I've tried her over and over, but never a sign. By cracky, I'll recall that Teasletown story

to her! That's bound to get her. My Lord, but wasn't she mad that night? Yes, I'll spring that story on her to-night at the party."

Pauline sat at the head of the beautifully appointed table that had been placed in her rooms. A royal-purple robe was thrown over her high-backed chair and a clever arrangement of laurel was suspended above her head. Gossman sat at her left, pompous and beaming. Miss Nestor was beside him, in grim contrast to his generous proportions. Lieutenant Lewis, as guest of honor, sat on Pauline's right, with the ingénue, Miss Dewey, very slim and young looking, beside his splendid figure. The leading man was placed at the foot of the table opposite Pauline. Dotson and others of the company filled in the remaining spaces.

The rooms were full of flowers. The centerpiece was a Greek temple made of small white blossoms with the green cleverly interwoven. Everything had been arranged while the play was in progress. Two men were there to serve. And champagne sparkled in the glasses that were lifted as toast after toast was given in honor of their star.

Oh, how glorious and wonderful it was to be so great! She was a veritable queen to them. How could she acknowledge, ever, to this admiring company that she was not the great artist they believed her, but the poor little usurper of another's greatness? How could she admit that to the big man on her right, who looked at her so worshipfully, to Gossman, who regarded her with such satisfaction? Pauline felt, in this hour of her triumph, that she could not give it all up—at least—

Again Satan whispered, "Wait!" and again she hesitated.

"I'll enjoy being truly great and—all"—all meant Lewis' adoration—"for a little while, and then——"

Lewis made a pretense of drawing patterns on the tablecloth every time her slim hand rested thereon, as it did quite frequently, to the neglect of her coffee. Her face flushed, and her breath came quickly, when their hands touched. And so naive are lovers that they never dreamed anybody else saw. Everybody did.

And so the night sped away. They exchanged experiences, matched wits, talked plays, pictures, literature, politics, and religion, skipping from subject to subject without effort. They had all traveled—knew life as it was and as it was pictured in books and on canvas. They sang or laughed as they pleased, though never boisterously, as actors are supposed to do because of the few who make themselves disgustingly conspicuous in theatrical life, as do those of their class in every other walk.

"We hold the world in our heads to patter about, do we not?" smiled Lewis, after a discussion of ancient peoples, their art and literature, that came skimming back over modern Europe and down to small towns in Massachusetts, California, and Texas.

Miss Nestor understood him.

"Actors are ignoramuses only in fiction, she said. "In plays and stories, we always talk slang and show our utter inability to profit by travel that is supposed to be so educating to other folk. But speaking of Texas—" Her eyes sought Pauline's face. "It happened in my early days. The leading woman with our company was a magnificent actress, but she simply couldn't get a hearing in New York. She later became famous—really famous. We were playing a place called Teasletown, Texas. Any of you ever play Teasletown?"

"My God!" groaned the character man.

"I see you have," she said, but she watched Pauline's face for some sign.

"The town didn't even have a telephone. And the manager of the opera house was very religious. He warned us, before the curtain went up, that he 'would not have any obscene talk in the play.' He said the minute any of us said anything out of the way, he would turn off the gas. The previous attraction had been a fly-by-night burlesque show. He stood right in the wings, with his hand on the connection, and every time he thought anybody was going to say anything, he would shout, 'Out go the lights!' till it got on everybody's nerves.

"The show was going awfully. We couldn't get a laugh or a 'hand' till it came to the leading woman's business of going to the 'prop' phone. Then she got as far as 'Hell——' and before she could finish, the lights went out. The manager rushed on the stage in the dark, knocking over the great money safe. The leading woman screamed, 'Robbers! Help! Murder!' The actors all ran in, tied up the manager, still in the dark, and carried him into the wings. Then one of the boys found the connection, and the leading woman lit the gas. They lifted up the safe, tugging with all their might, as if it were real iron. The audience got a glimpse of the back of it, however, and it brought a big laugh. Aside from that, the show went fine all the rest of the evening. Only the manager could be heard swearing in the wings all through the love scenes.

"When the leading man said to Fay, 'I love you——' the manager shouted, 'Damn!' and the leading man finished, 'lips.'

"Then the leading man said: 'Now that you are my own, I will lead you into——' 'Hell!' thundered the manager.

"And so it went on, the manager never meaning to help us out like that."

There was laughter and applause all around the table.

"Wasn't that a scream?" Miss Nestor addressed herself pointedly to Pauline, who felt a sudden chill, as if the story somehow were directly connected with her.

"It must have been!" she answered. That curious transference of thought which we call telepathy had told her the portent of this story and made her feel that Alice Nestor knew her for what she was, as, indeed, she did. Watching Pauline's face closely, the old woman knew that never had she heard the story before, and Laura Figlan was the leading woman who had played so prominent a part in it. Well, what about it? She must think it out at her leisure. That the girl at the head of this table was an impostor she knew. She was dishonest—she had stolen a name; and first, last, and always, Alice Nestor held honesty.

"But she can act," the old woman mused again, as if that truly covered a multitude of sins.

Almost with the dawn came the morning papers. Gossman fell upon one, and the rest went to whoever could get them. The other folk read over their fellows' shoulders.

The critics were unanimous in their praise of the great Norwegian, who handled an audience as she pleased. On thinking her performance over, they realized how they had been tricked. Without a dissent, they agreed that she was the greatest actress on the American stage.

Each member of the company received excellent mention, and they all got up and began dancing just as if they heard music that ordinary ears like Lieutenant Lewis' could not hear. Gossman waltzed with Pauline. The leading man trotted with the maid in the play. Dotson dragged Miss Nestor to the floor, and, to Lewis' surprise, the old woman fell into an intricate interpretation—of the hesitation. The engaged couple danced together, and the

comedian and fat Miss Fallon, the black mammy of the play, did a comedy tango. Then they all changed partners without once losing step. Pauline danced out of Gossman's arms, and Lewis held out his; she went into them, and they closed about her for the first time. He fell into step with her and held himself, by a fierce exercise of will, from smothering her against his breast.

Finally, when they had exhausted themselves, the gay party broke up and went home to sleep. Lewis seemed inclined to linger, but Dotson lingered with him. He had seen his friend's subjection and was determined to make one more effort to rescue him from "the way of all flesh."

The caterer's men had everything out of Pauline's rooms by the time her guests were gone. Left alone, she stood in the center of the handsome apartment and laughed for joy.

"Oh, it's good to be alive!" she cried softly. "It's good! It's good! And to be great! To be looked up to and deferred to!"

CHAPTER XII.

Unable to sleep, Pauline rose at noon. She had forced herself to stay in bed until then, but the multitude of thoughts that came trooping up, demanding attention, would not let her rest. Those blank years in San Antonio; the violence of her breaking away; her fears and her promise; the wretched years on the road; then success! And love! And yet was it either? Was it not rather a fool's paradise from which she must awaken to find herself more unhappy than she had ever been?

No, not that! For no matter what happened, they could not deny her genius—a genius as great as Laura Figlan's own. Some of the critics had said that *Laura Figlan had grown, was greater than ever!*

"There is a softer note about her, an absence of her old tendency toward posing that was the one blemish on her work," one had said.

"Her art is perfect, yet it has all the freshness of spontaneity without the usual crudities of impromptu action," had been the verdict of another.

She could act! She could act! Nothing could alter that! These men knew. That terrible "death watch" knew. They might put her in jail for what she had done, but she had proved her talent to herself as well as to them! So Pauline felt. That she must pay greatly for the proof of her undoubted genius she considered but fair.

Then she fell to wondering about Laura Figlan. Surely she would know about the grand opening she was supposed to have had. Even in war times, such news was bound to reach the London papers. It was curious that she had not already heard. What if, as hinted, the star had married a German count? What if she were now in Germany? In that case, she would not know anything about Pauline Stevens until after the war and then— It was hard to give up so soon, to have greatness and love in her hand and to lay them down before she had tasted their full sweetness. Why not enjoy her great feast for a little while at least? And when the sword fell—well, she would have had the feast. And what if it shouldn't fall? Had not every expected danger been blown away like feathers on a wind?

She ordered a substantial breakfast sent up and dressed slowly.

The vague uneasiness which is the companion alike of love and guilt assailed her. What if, with the lure of the lights and her acting gone, Lewis had changed his mind? Or perhaps that little green-eyed Doris Clayton had got to him. She might even know him. Had he not said that he had met Miss Figlan? Perhaps he had met Doris

also. And she might be able to *prove* to him that she was telling the truth.

There was a knock on her door. She admitted the man carrying her breakfast table. He set it in place, daintily arranged with a single American beauty in a slender vase. The tempting grapefruit and fragrant bacon and chops whetted her appetite.

The man placed a chair for her, poured her coffee, and withdrew. On a silver tray was a pile of telegrams and several letters. Pauline took them up and looked at the addresses—all to Laura Figlan. There had been a pile of telegrams at the theater the night before. She had not touched them. Célèste had opened them during the first act and laid them ready for her to scan. She had not looked at them or given them any thought. Her mind had been too busy with other matters. Now it came to her that she had before her telegrams and letters intended for Laura Figlan. She couldn't open them—that was certain. And yet what was she to do about them?

Célèste, having heard the waiter's knock, had dressed hastily and now came in.

"*Oh, mon Dieu!*" she exclaimed contritely, at the sight of Pauline fully dressed. "Why did you not wake me! I beg ten thousand—"

"It's all right, Célèste," Pauline said. "You needed the sleep. You were awake all night."

As she was finishing her breakfast and wondering when Lewis would call, the phone rang. Her heart leaped joyfully, and the quick color flamed in her face. She lowered her lids, that Célèste might not see the joy that flared in them. The maid answered.

"Send him up," she said.

"Célèste!" cried Pauline, springing up indignantly. "Are you having a guest sent up without—"

"No, madam, a letter, she come by special messenger."

"Oh." Pauline sat down suddenly. She had thought it was Lewis coming up, and for all her indignation at her maid's presumption, her heart had welcomed him. Instead—a letter by messenger! What could it be? A cold fear gripped her. To be guilty is to be always a prey to a thousand fears. How foolish she was! He was sending her a note; of course.

Then came the expected knock. She wanted to run to open it and take the letter herself, but she let Célèste go. How slow the girl was, with her elaborate thanks! Why did the French waste so much time on politeness? The boy wanted a tip, not thanks. But Pauline still had no money. He should have a generous one, that boy, when she received her first week's salary. She thought she would not make her confession until she had received that, so, in case anything happened, she could at least pay her hotel bill, maid, and taxis. What could he have to say? She almost snatched the letter from Célèste. Eagerly she looked at the writing. Then a chill seized her.

It was addressed to Miss Laura Figlan, and the name *was set off with quotation marks*. What did it mean? She felt none of the reluctance about opening this letter that had kept her from the others; this one was beyond question for her. Yet she held it unopened for several seconds. By special messenger! A man's handwriting, too! Heart pounding and with cold forebodings, she slit the envelope with her butter knife. A clipping fell out—nothing more. Eagerly she read it. It was an account of a damage suit brought by the author of a widely advertised play against a motion-picture company for producing a picture of the same title as the play and in this way securing the benefits of the play's excessive advertising. The action was brought on the grounds of unfair competition in trade.

Just that! No more! Name enclosed in quotation marks, damage suit, widely advertised title! A title could not be copyrighted, but a widely advertised one became a sort of trademark.

A man's handwriting! What man knew that she was not— A horrifying thought came to her. Lewis knew Laura Figlan. Pauline had never seen his handwriting. Gossman and Dotson knew her, but it was impossible that they had sent this clipping. If Lewis had known all along, why had he let her go ahead with it, then? What nonsense! She got up and went to the phone. Doris Clayton might have seen him this morning.

She got the office, and asked for Lewis' hotel. She had to know the worst at once. If he was asleep—if he thought her bold—well, no matter. She must know. She was so sick that she could hardly stand.

"Let me speak to Lieutenant Lewis," she said when a girl's voice answered her.

There was a moment of silence, then the same voice spoke:

"Lieutenant Lewis has checked out."

"Checked out!" Pauline repeated vaguely.

"Yes, madam."

"When?"

"I don't know. I'll find out." Again there was silence. "About ten o'clock this morning," said the voice.

"Did he leave any—word? Any address?"

"Just a minute." Silence. "No, madam, he didn't leave a forwarding address."

"Thank—you."

Pauline hung up the receiver and staggered dizzily to a chair. Checked out! Gone! It could mean but one thing. He had not even left a forwarding address. That woman! She had had her revenge! She had seen him and convinced him, and he had sent her.

Pauline, that clipping to give her an idea of the injury she was doing to others. Then he had gone away so as not to see her again. How horrible! She had not thought anything so awful could come of it.

Well, that was done. Her brief, sweet love dream was ended, laid on the pyre, a sacrifice to ambition. No, not that. Ambition had given the dream and had taken it away again. Who was it that had said, "Husband, wife, children—aye, even mother I slay for thy whim, O Ambition!"

She sat for a long time, her big, somber eyes that moved restlessly here and there the only sign of life about her. Cèleste came in several times from the bedroom, but she made as little sound as possible.

Finally Pauline sighed deeply—the heavy sigh of enforced resignation that one gives for the dead when the last tear is shed and one is too exhausted to weep more. No doubt came to her that he was forever lost to her.

Well, then, what next? She had to decide what she must do!

After a while she rose, stretched her arms above her head in a lingering gesture, then let them drop suddenly. She had decided. She had set her feet that way, she had found life's sweetest song and its bitterest already. She would go on and see what more lay there. She owed it to Gossman to make money for him—all she could before Laura Figlan came to collect. Even Lewis would not think better of her for stirring up all this and then leaving Gossman to face it. He surely wouldn't want her to—

She drew herself up angrily. What matter about his thought of her now? And couldn't he have talked it out with her—given her a chance to explain her side of it? Surely he should have known that only a great need could have seduced her! He hadn't given her the benefit of the doubt, even.

She walked around the room aimlessly, as if uncertain what to do next. Presently she began to undress. Suddenly the terrible strain of the past week, of the past night, fell on her, and she felt tired and old—utterly weary. She went into her bedroom.

The man came for the breakfast table, and Cèleste brought the stack of telegrams and letters to Pauline, who was now in bed. She also brought a paper knife and laid them all together on the white counterpane. Pauline took the telegrams up one by one, slit the envelopes, and read the contents. If she were going to do this thing, there must be no halfway measures. She must know who in this country knew Laura Figlan and would expect to be recognized. The letters she did not open. Whatever happened or didn't happen, she would never open a private letter addressed to Laura Figlan. The one set off by quotation marks she had known was meant for her.

There was a penny postal signed "your brother." He lived out in Illinois, had enlisted in the American army, and expected to be in New York soon. He hoped to see her before he sailed. Pauline looked at the return address on the reverse side—"George McMillan, Hoopston, Illinois." So there was a brother to meet. Well, what of it? Slowly a light broke over her face. Was it possible that the great Figlan *herself* was an impostor—a bluff? It seemed so. A brother named— But what did it matter? Nothing really mattered. She threw the postal aside and tried to induce sleep. But she tossed about, jumping at every sound, waiting for the phone that would tell her that she was mistaken, that Lewis was in town, that he knew nothing of that clipping. And yet she thought that she had buried him in her mind.

The afternoon wore away, however, and he did not call. A five-thirty she



The tall, fair-haired star swept the crowd with her passionate, heavy-lidded eyes.



There was a buzz, a turning of heads, as the butler announced: "Miss Laura Figlan."

got up and dressed again and went down to dinner, then over to the theater by seven-thirty. And into the first two acts she put the hurt love of a woman which had been missing from them the night before. She knew now that she had needed just this to make a great actress of her.

Ambition marks its children and

drags them through suffering toward their goal. There is no other way. Some one has said that all great art has grown out of the graves of dead loves. Nor had Pauline forgotten the passion and fire that had swept the third act along to its startling climax. But to-night it was art, where the night before it had been reality. If Doris Clayton

had undertaken to break her morale, she had failed again. Pauline Stevens' spirit could not be broken by pain or fear or defeat.

Gossman came back beaming after the second act, but there was no sign of Lewis or Dotson. Nor would she ask for them.

Miss Nestor studiously avoided Pauline all through the performance, hurried past her in the wings, pretending not to see her. The old woman was troubled and undecided. That the star was an impostor she knew. But that she was also a great artist none could deny. Why, then, this masquerade? And what was her duty in the matter? Was she not a party to the crime, if crime it were, in keeping silent? On the other hand, who would believe her if she told what she knew?

"The girl is a great actress," she mused, while playing a scene with Pauline. "By crackey, I believe she's greater than Fay!" She finished her scene, made an exit, and finished her thought. "Then why on earth is she putting her neck in a noose to kill herself?"

Pauline, making an exit just then, stopped to have a word with her. The old woman froze up, answered briefly, incisely, and walked away. The girl stared after her in astonishment. What was the secret of this unfriendliness? Truly she was walking on thin ice. Also, she was entirely convinced that Doris Clayton had not finished with her.

Ah, well—here was human greatness! Did it always cost so much? A poor, pale thing at best, or so it seemed now.

But in her luxurious rooms that night her mood changed. What mattered anything? Her dream had come true! The thing she had worked for so desperately these five hard years was hers. What if it were but for a day?

"I don't care!" her spirit cried as she slipped into bed. "I've had the feast, and it's worth the price!"

Then nature came to the aid of her fagged body and mind, and she fell into a deep, dreamless, refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

In the nine weeks that followed, things moved without a hitch for Pauline. No question of her had in any way arisen. Actors and actresses who had met Laura Figlan during her American engagement five years before, even members of her American cast, had called at the theater and at her hotel. None of them had questioned her identity, and she had learned that if she kept discreetly silent, they one and all gave her the information she needed as regards Miss Figlan's relation to themselves. The star had few friends and no intimates. For this Pauline was thankful. Miss Figlan's chief connection, outside her company, seemed to be "parties." A knowing smile, an adroit question: "Were you on that party where we——" "No, I was on the one where we——" the reply would come back, with a full account of the particular party or parties in which the speaker had been involved.

How easy it all was! And how brilliant her success in those weeks! Night after night crowds were turned away from the theater. Seats had to be secured days in advance. Truly Pauline was earning the money where-with Gossman must pay when Laura Figlan came to claim her own. Meanwhile, where was the Norwegian? Why had she not already come forward?

And so Pauline waited for the fall of the sword that hung over her and might take off her head at any moment. Already its point had pierced her heart. For not once in her nine brilliant weeks had he come near her or sent her any word. And in view of his open admiration, her pride would not permit her to inquire about him. To have done so would have been to acknowledge

that he had left her as he had—without a word. Nor had Dotson volunteered any information regarding his friend's whereabouts.

Sitting before a rosewood dressing table in her luxurious suite, Pauline studied the superscriptions on a pile of unopened letters that had come in a daily stream, mostly to the theater. Some were from charitable organizations, some from men, some from women. Most of them had a New York return address and were probably from over-the-footlight admirers. Those from out of town she had memorized for future reference. There were three, however, which held her attention. They were all in the same masculine handwriting, had been mailed at widely separated points, and had no return address. One had come two days after the opening, one four days later, and the third three weeks after that. She shuffled them musingly. All but these three were in different handwritings, no two alike, which seemed as it should be. None but a close friend would keep writing to some one who did not answer. And would not a close friend know more about the star than these letters seemed to indicate? Then might these not be for her, Pauline? Suppose they *were* from Him?

She put them quickly back in a lock box on a little stand beside her dressing table that she had bought to keep the letters in until she had decided how to dispose of them. Unwilling to burn them, she dared not let them go back to the post office, to be returned to the senders or perhaps to find their way through a wonderful mail service to the real Laura Figlan and give her the key to what was happening.

They were, however, a source of constant temptation to Pauline. She dangled with the thought of those three letters. Could they be— But no. Did not Dotson's reticence about his friend show plainly that there was

something all too significant about the sudden action of the man who had committed himself in all save words to her? If Dotson were not sure that Lewis did not wish it, he would surely have mentioned his friend's name at some time. He never had—not once since they had gone away together on the morning after the big party in Pauline's rooms. That Dotson knew Lewis had run away from her was shown by his attitude. Also by his attitude, she knew that he did not know what she believed to be the true reason for her lover's going. The young manager was just as courteous, just as friendly in every way, just as eager to please her and do court to her genius, but he simply ignored Lieutenant Lewis' existence as far as she was concerned.

She let down her heavy golden hair and began to brush it slowly.

Oh, if only she dared open those letters! But on that point she was firm. She had won a New York hearing, great success, beautiful clothes, luxury to the last degree, adulation, and money, by using Laura Figlan's fame and personality, but there were two things she would not do—sign the star's name and open private letters addressed to her. And so whether Lewis had written or not must forever remain a mystery unless he came back and told her—which did not seem likely.

Laura Figlan's brother continued to do his correspondence on penny postals, for which Pauline was thankful. He was eager to go over, and unless they went directly from the troop train to the transport, he certainly meant to see her.

The difficulty of signature Pauline had been forced to meet some time ago. The management of the hotel had called attention to the fact that her signing of her suite number was, to say the least, unwise.

"A dishonest or indiscreet waiter might use, or cause some one else to use,

so easy a device for robbing you or us," the manager had protested, showing her all her unsigned meal checks at the end of the first week.

"Then I'll pay cash," she said, covering the checks with a hundred-dollar bill.

"But that is not necessary," replied the manager hastily. "We don't want to put you to such inconvenience and——"

"Then how will this do?" Pauline laughingly took up a pencil from the desk and hastily sketched a small, perfect fig, beside which she wrote her suite number.

"Perfectly good signature," grinned the manager.

Accustomed to the various and often outrageous eccentricities of theatrical stars, he was not minded to be too particular with this beautiful woman who was packing the Huron Theater night after night and who would in all probability be a highly paying guest for months to come.

So that had been arranged, all her bills for the various courtesies extended by the hotel being signed in this way. The problem of a bank account had come next. It was impossible for her to keep the money she earned about the hotel. After thinking that out, she went over to Jersey City and opened a savings account in her own name. Then she came back to New York, and in a convenient bank, rented a lock box wherein she could keep several hundred dollars for current expenses.

And how that savings account had climbed in those few weeks! Even her extravagant manner of living seemed to make no impression on its growth. For the contract that the great Laura Figlan had signed and then repudiated with such indifference had called not only for an excellent salary, but also for a good percentage of the gross receipts of the house. The size of her weekly earnings had fairly staggered Pauline that

Wednesday night after her first week and a half in the part. At the end of the third act, Dotson had brought back a statement showing the entire weekly receipts, and in a perfectly matter-of-fact way had figured up her percentage in addition to her fixed salary. No mention was made, of course, of the contract that Pauline knew they had with Figlan.

"Will you take a check or cash?" he had asked.

"Cash, please," she had smiled, and he had brought it during the fourth act. He had, every Wednesday night thereafter, brought her pay back in new hundred-dollar bills.

She was thinking all this over when Célèste came in without a word and put up the glorious hair that she had been brushing absently. So readily do we adapt ourselves to the higher places in life that Pauline had ceased to thrill at these little services. A personal maid, a car always at her disposal, and bowing servitors, were now necessities to her, instead of luxuries.

"What gown will madame wear?" Célèste asked. "Ze blue georgette with sable trimmings is most becoming."

"Yes, I think I'll wear that," Pauline said wearily.

And it was brought out—the newest of Madame Perot's creations for her.

Standing before the long mirror in the exquisite gown of soft blue with wide bands of sable, she made a stunning picture of beauty and success. "Something of this must have come to her."

"Success, Célèste, is merely the business of being happy," she said.

"Yes, madame," replied the maid, who was accustomed to these half-sad, often whimsical observations of her mistress. "And if I make no mistake, a woman is happy only when she have a man so!" Célèste held up her hand, thumb and first finger pressed tightly together.

Pauline smiled.

"Her man, yes. Come—I'll be late."

Célèste went down with her mistress to the car that waited to take her to a fashionable reception given by a leader of New York's social life for the benefit of the Belgian sufferers.

"Miss Laura Figlan," announced the butler, as she entered the magnificent, flower-laden rooms where women and men of fashion sought surcease from the boredom of idleness. There was a buzz, a turning of heads, and the tall, fair-haired star swept the crowd with her passionate, heavy-lidded eyes as she might have an audience. Indeed, they were for the moment an audience, eager to see her at close range without the lights and make-up and the lure of the stage that lifts one out of the intimately personal and lends a mystery of its own.

"I'm so glad you came, my dear," her hostess was saying. "I was afraid you were going to be late for the program. It will begin in about ten minutes."

Pauline dropped a gold piece in the teakwood box by the door, with its sign, "For the Belgian Sufferers," and passed on, to be at once surrounded by young men and old; also by women who were curious, envious, or who perhaps really admired her.

Presently there was a general movement toward the big ballroom, where chairs were placed. A miniature stage had been erected at the far end of the long room and curtained off with rich tapestries. An orchestra played softly behind a screen of palms and ferns to the right of the stage, making the music seem without a source.

"We've engaged a friend of yours to give a little skit," whispered the hostess, bending over Pauline as she passed the star's seat near the aisle.

A cold hand clutched the girl's heart, and she waited quivering for the rise of that curtain and the appearance of

her "friend." What new menace was at hand?

First came a male quartet; then a barefoot dance by a slim, ethereal girl. Pauline wondered if this were she. No, a dance would not be called a skit. There was a piano solo by a society girl with stage aspirations, and a weird pantomime by a team who combined dancing and juggling into some sort of mystical performance. A snake dancer brought a gasp as she appeared with a great slimy beast around her neck and proceeded to caress it, even kissing its ugly mouth. A large woman sang gloriously, first in a high soprano, then in almost a baritone. She was known as "the woman with two voices." A noted cartoonist came out and showed how easy it is to turn pencil strokes into American eagles—if you know how.

Pauline eliminated the woman singer and the barefoot dancer, also the cartoonist. The snake charmer's performance might be called a skit by a layman, and there were the pantomimists and the quartet.

She was speculating on these when the curtains parted, showing a miniature drawing-room. A man bending over a crystal ball muttered unintelligibly, passing one hand over his eyes and head, then waving it in mysterious fashion at an unseen object.

Suddenly a bright little figure came and stood before him. She made her entrance from the same side as that on which Pauline sat, so that the star could not see her face, under its big, drooping hat, at first, but there was something familiar about the figure. A vague presentiment took hold of Pauline. She waited breathlessly. The man waved a hand toward the girl, and she turned suddenly from him, her face full to the audience—Doris Clayton!

Pauline never knew what their act was about, or the two that followed it. They seemed endless, but she could not

be so rude as to leave during the performance. As soon as it was over, she rose and began making her way toward the door. She was stopped over and over again. Would she never get out? Above everything she wished to avoid meeting Doris, who, having got in here on pretended friendship for her, would not, she felt sure, hesitate to humiliate her if possible.

"Oh, Lolly, darling!" The hated voice fell on her ears like a clap of thunder, and Doris came from behind a palm beside the ballroom door. She had made her change from costume during the two last numbers and, slipping out through another room, had come around and stationed herself where Pauline would be compelled to pass. Doris flung both arms around her with an adoring expression. Several people were looking on interestedly. Not to have spoken would have made Pauline conspicuous.

"I thought you were in Los Angeles," she said, forcing a smile.

"I was, but I had a fight with the director the first week," gurgled Doris, "and quit right in the middle of the picture. My, he was mad! But he almost went on his knees to get me to finish it. I made him pay me a hundred dollars a day for ten days' work; then I packed my little trunk and hied me back to good old New York. Oh, and who do you think is with me? Dan Frawley!"

She announced this as if she felt sure Pauline would be overwhelmed with joy at the news. Not daring to risk any sort of expression in word or look, Pauline's face was absolutely blank.

"You aren't going to be snobby with poor old Dan, are you, Lolly?" Doris coaxed. "He's so crazy to see you! Just as mad about you as ever. Here he comes now."

Pauline followed Doris' green eyes and saw a tall, dark man with longish hair and an ashen, cadaverous face

making his way through the crowd toward her. His black eyes looked eagerly into hers. A moment more and her limp hand lay in his. He was gazing down at her as if the love in his heart were so consuming that he could not conceal it, try as he would. They were the center of an interested group.

"Little Laura!" he said in a dramatic rumble. "So we meet again!"

Pauline knew that he was acting—that he was fully conscious of his audience, though he seemed so entirely to have forgotten it. His voice had that deep, throaty tone so much affected by second and third-rate actors who have not yet learned the high art of absolute naturalness which seems so easy and is so hard to acquire.

"How are you, Dan?" Pauline managed to say matter-of-factly. She had no idea, of course, as to what their game was, but she would not be caught off guard if she could help it.

"I saw your performance the other night," he said sentimentally, "and, my, how it carried me back!"

"It didn't carry you back stage to renew old acquaintance," she laughed shortly, at the same time drawing her hand away.

He tried to hold onto it.

"I didn't know whether you would care to see me or not." His voice was pitched low as if in confidence, but it carried clearly over the rooms, stopping the buzz of talk. "You know, the last time we met—well, it was rather painful." He said this last with a deep note of pathos. "Even now, I wouldn't have spoken, but Doris said——"

"Don't you think we'd better do our reminiscing another time?" Pauline broke in. "I was just going. I have an engagement with my manager at five o'clock."

"Of course," he said hastily.

"Call me at my hotel some morning," she replied, moving away.

"Good," he said, offering his hand again. "To-morrow?" She noticed that he did not ask where she was stopping. "You've been doing some big things since—those days," he finished. "Don't forget. To-morrow?"

"I'm engaged all day to-morrow," she replied coldly.

"Surely you——" he began; then broke off and turned away with a sort of desperate gesture.

It was all so theatrical—so obviously staged! Pauline's face was crimson. She felt the curious eyes of these folk, like prongs of steel prodding into her quivering flesh.

"He's desperate about her," she heard Doris say in a loud stage whisper.

"Who is he?" some one asked.

"Her first husband."

Pauline steadied herself against a table.

"First? How many——" laughed a little matron, who resented the fact that one of her "tame pigeons" had been showing Pauline marked attention.

Doris gave her little gurgling laugh.

"Oh, that would be telling, and she's a friend of mine."

There was a distinct titter back of Pauline. She found her hostess, and got out as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER XIV.

Alice Nestor's interest in Pauline's crime, as she called it, and her own duty in the matter had come to a sudden and unexpected halt through the development of her own affairs. Her precious son John, under the influence of bad companions, had "borrowed" certain monies to the sum of five thousand dollars, which he had lost on the races. He had fully expected to win and put it back. Being a likable young man, in spite of his character, his employer was disposed to be lenient with him and would not press the matter, providing he would make good the amount taken. Miss Nestor had in the

bank at the moment exactly one week's salary, so close to the wall had John kept her.

She went to Gossman. Her yellow old face was dark red, and her grim eyes shifted uneasily. She knew it would be difficult to make him see the matter as she saw it.

"Henry," she said, in her direct way, "we're good for a year's run here, at least. I want to put up my season's salary as security for a loan of five thousand dollars. Can I get it?"

"What's John been doing now?" he asked sharply.

"I asked you for a loan, not a catechism," she replied tartly. But a mother's love knows no pride where her child's welfare is concerned, and she did not walk out as she would have done under ordinary circumstances, but haltingly and at great length, for her, explained the matter of her son's default.

"He meant only to borrow it," she finished, quoting John. "He believed he had a sure tip and couldn't lose."

"He knew there was always a chance of losing, didn't he?" questioned Gossman.

"Yes, he must have," she was forced to admit.

"How did he figure on paying this money back in case he did lose?"

"He probably thought I would have it," she stammered.

"Exactly!" said Gossman. "It's because he has always counted on you to bear his burdens that he is what he is, and now is the time to teach him that he and not you must pay for his conduct. Until he learns, he's not going to be worth his room in hell."

"But, Henry," she protested, "he'll go to the penitentiary if I don't make good this money!"

"Alice," Gossman said gently, "you've raised that boy for the penitentiary. Now don't get mad," he added in haste, as she rose angrily.



"Sit down," he whispered. "Do you want to make a scene here and have the whole story in the morning papers?"

"I'm your friend, Alice, and I feel like a father to that boy. Nobody could help liking the sunny-tempered young cuss. His father was, I've heard, a fine man——"

"The finest God ever made," she said, and sat down.

"I know his mother is a fine woman," Gossman went on, "but through the weakness of her love, she has deprived her boy of backbone by making herself his backbone, and the time has come to rectify her mistakes."

Great tears came into Miss Nestor's

yellow eyes and rolled down her withered old face, which, however, did not lose its grim expression. Entirely as she had refused to believe that her son was in any way deficient, deep in her stern old heart she knew the truth. Gossman did not mince matters, as he went on to hammer home what sort of a man she had raised. Her sense of justice forced her to listen. The producer was not unjust to the boy—did not rail at him, but stated facts.

"Hard as it seems, Alice," Gossman finished, "the only hope for that boy is to let him pay the penalty of his crime. Be honest with yourself. That's what it is—crime. He's stolen money entrusted to his care because he knew you would make it good. If you do, he'll steal more next time, and still more the time after. You can't keep on making up these matters. The time will come when he'll have to pay. Let him have his lesson now, and when he comes out, you'll have some money ahead and can set him up in a little business of some sort. That'll be far better than investing five thousand dollars in further weakness for him."

Miss Nestor spoke wearily.

"I couldn't do it, Henry. I couldn't let my boy go to the penitentiary. And, anyway, the five thousand has got to be paid. John's going to prison wouldn't do that."

"Let him pay it when he comes out," said Gossman. "I feel that to pay this money is to finish the bad job you've started and make an absolute criminal of him."

Miss Nestor rose.

"If that's the way you feel, Henry," she said, "I can't look to you for the money. Good-by." And she walked out of his office as Pauline came in to talk over some new lithographs Gossman planned to get out for her.

Full of the subject of Alice Nestor and her boy, the producer told Pauline the whole story.

"But surely you don't mean that she should let her son go to prison!" she exclaimed.

"I do mean it," he replied, "and what's more I don't intend to let her have the money. If she wants it to set him up in business after he's learned his lesson, I won't want a lien on her season's salary."

"But prison breaks a man's spirit, when it doesn't make a confirmed criminal of him."

"John needs his broken. It's the wrong sort of spirit."

"But a mother couldn't see her son—"

"She'll have to, if she can't get the money."

"But surely she can! Hasn't she anything to put up as security—any property?"

"Not a thing. He's kept her plucked clean. And a season's pay isn't negotiable—it's too uncertain a quantity even in the case of a success such as we have. Too many things could happen to knock the bottom out."

"But surely she has friends?"

"I'll bet she couldn't raise that amount among them. Those who haven't sons are wasters themselves. Actors never have any money."

That night Pauline, seeing Miss Nestor seated forlornly on the stage, went over to speak to her. She had long since given up trying to be friends with the old woman, but now a feeling of deep sympathy made her want to say some cheering word to the broken mother. Miss Nestor stiffened at her approach. Pauline would not notice it, but chatted away for several minutes. Finally Miss Nestor's attitude became so markedly unfriendly that Pauline spoke impulsively:

"Miss Nestor, why do you dislike me?"

"It seems to me that it's my privilege to like as I choose," replied the old woman grimly.

The girl turned away, hurt beyond words—and bitterly resentful. She rarely made direct advances to any one. People liked her spontaneously, and her pride was humbled by this rebuff.

Pauline was making her first exit in the fourth act when she heard some one say:

"I came to ask you to have supper with me after the show."

She turned and saw Dan Frawley approaching. She caught her breath.

"How did you get past the doorman?" she asked sharply.

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"Just told him I was your husband."

"Did you say *divorced* husband?"

"As long as that wouldn't have been true, I didn't," Frawley replied with an evil smile.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, simply that that Chicago divorce doesn't hold good in New York State, and as such your marriage to Joseph Delaney was not a marriage, and I am still your husband according to the laws of this State. Come to supper with me, and we can talk it out at our leisure."

"All right," she said briefly, and went on with a sinking heart to finish the last act. What next? Was there no end to the iniquities of this woman whose sins she, Pauline, had elected to assume?

Seated in a quiet little restaurant on Seventh Avenue, Pauline's passionate eyes studied the dark, cadaverous face of the man opposite her. She had insisted on an out-of-the-way place.

"What will you eat?" he asked.

"Nothing," she replied coldly.

"But we must eat something or we can't sit here."

"Order for yourself," she said.

The waiter bent over them.

"Two egg salads," the man said.

"I don't care for anything, I said," Pauline cut in sharply.

"Very well. Anything to drink?" he asked with a satirical smile.

"Nothing."

"Bring me a gin rickey," he said. "That's all."

"Well, what do you want?" Pauline demanded, as soon as they were alone.

The man looked hurt.

"What do I want? My wife, of course." There was such unmistakable lust in his black eyes that the girl's soul cringed within her, but outwardly she gave no sign.

"I am not your wife, and you know it," she said.

"Not my wife!" There was a devilish look on his face. "Do you deny that you married me in Buffalo eighteen years ago? The records show that Laura Figlan and Dan Frawley—"

"The records show nothing of the sort," she retorted sharply, "and you know it. There was no Laura Figlan then." She was guessing at this from the fact of the brother whose name was McMillan.

The man's smile became quizzical.

"All right, then. They don't show that," he said. "But they show that Fay McMillan—"

"How about that Chicago divorce?" she broke in, recollecting his words in the theater.

"Not worth the paper it was written on," he said, leaning tensely across the table. "We were married in New York State. You secured a Chicago divorce and married again in New York State. That second marriage is bigamy."

"I don't believe you, in the first place," Pauline replied, "and even if it were true, I didn't know," she finished hesitatingly. She knew that he was not deceived about her identity.

"Ignorance is no excuse in law," Frawley returned, "and, anyway, what about your third marriage to Howard Potter, without even the formality of a Chicago divorce?"

Pauline veiled her eyes and thought

for a moment. It did not seem possible that Laura Figlan could have been such a fool, but the man spoke with the authority of certain knowledge. What sort of a woman was Laura Figlan, anyway? But no matter about that. The point was that while this man knew she was not the star, she dared not admit it.

"You can't prove that last statement," she fenced.

"I can prove that you and Potter were married during your American engagement five years ago. Can you prove that you were divorced from Joseph Delaney before that?"

She saw the trend of his intentions. He held certain secrets that, if made public, would unquestionably create a big scandal, which she must prevent at all cost. Neither she nor the production would be helped by such an exposé. Even the public has its limits. And bigamy—

"As I asked you in the beginning, what do you want?" she inquired, without raising her eyes.

"My wife!" he stated with dramatic force. "Nothing else."

Pauline looked him steadily in the eye now and spoke slowly, deliberately.

"I am not your wife, as you know perfectly well. Nor have you any idea of forcing yourself on me—"

"I haven't, eh? Well, you're mistaken!" he cried, reaching for her hand, which lay on the table. She snatched it away furiously. He spoke with passionate fire. "You're beautiful. I want you! You want to hold what you have—won. Why not? You think I'm a criminal; well, we're a pair. We can grow fat together on our gains. But aside from that, I'm mad for you!"

Pauline got to her feet as the waiter brought the salad. Frawley jumped up and caught her arm.

"My wife is sick," he said to the waiter. "Get me a taxi." He put his arm around her. She drew away

angrily. "Sit down," he whispered. "Do you want to make a scene here and have the whole story in the morning papers?"

Pauline sank back into her chair, and he made a feint of giving her some water when the waiter came back to say that a cab would be there soon.

"Keep it waiting," Frawley said. "My wife feels better. Just a sudden dizziness." And he began to eat his salad, watching her with an air of great tenderness and solicitude. The man acted constantly. So conceited was he that he imagined himself under observation all the time.

"His type of actor always wears long hair and green coats," thought Pauline, in that whimsical way we have of making immaterial notes in moments of great mental stress. "A parlor and sidewalk actor who can't act on the stage!"

"I made you, Laura," the man complained, with deep pathos in his voice. "I taught you how to act and—"

"Enough of that," said Pauline sharply. She leaned across the table toward him, her eyes blazing. "You never taught me anything. You never saw me in your life before, until Doris Clayton brought you to the theater to see me for the purpose of hatching up this little plot. I never have been married to you or to anybody else and, if you have any idea that I am so in love with—what I've won that, in order to hold it, I will live with you as your wife, or even acknowledge you in any way, you are very much mistaken! I'll give the whole story to the papers tomorrow first!"

He saw that he had gone too far. He had no desire to rouse her to rebellion.

"You wouldn't be so foolish," he smiled, but there was a note of anxiety in his voice. "Especially as—well, Laura dear, if I'm repugnant to you, of course, I wouldn't for the world try to force my love on you."

He ignored her tacit confession of the fact that she was not the star. Pauline waited for him to go on.

"You have everything that I haven't," he said presently. "Money, fame, and all the good things of life that go with those two are yours, while I must count even the cost of a little after-theater supper like this and——"

"That drink you ordered cost almost as much as your salad," cut in Pauline, "and you've probably had others today. That usually accounts for a big, healthy man's having to count the cost of a supper. And now you want me——"

"I want you to share your—swag—with me," he snarled, goaded out of his theatrical pose by her stinging words.

"That's more to the point," said Pauline sarcastically. "And now that we've removed the veils, maybe you will tell me how much blackmail you and Doris Clayton have decided that I ought to pay you to keep your mouths shut."

"Doris has nothing to do with it," he replied haughtily. "This is a matter between me and my wife." He seemed determined to hold on to that deception.

"Didn't Doris hunt you up?" Pauline ignored his return to pretense.

"Well, what if she did?"

"I thought so. Now how much is it? I don't say I'll pay it, but I'll consider it."

"Oh, yes, you will pay it," he said in a tense whisper, his cadaverous face becoming almost satanic. "You'll pay it because you've got to, or go to prison for bigamy!"

"So?" replied Pauline. "Hardly that. I have simply to confess that I'm not Laura Figlan and that will settle the whole thing."

The man threw back his head and laughed as at a great joke.

"Doris was right," he said presently. "She said you'd think you could do

that. Well, my dear, I'm very much afraid that such a story won't hold water in court. You see, Doris Clayton will swear emphatically that you are Laura Figlan. I'll swear it, and a man ought to know his own wife. I have pictures of you taken eighteen years ago, and they look exactly as you do now. There are dozens of people, including your manager and the critics who saw Laura five years ago—folks who knew her well—who will swear you are she. Your 'confession' will look like a foolish attempt to escape imprisonment for bigamy. No, my dear, confession won't do."

Pauline's heart beat heavily. Her keen mind saw the absolute truth of his claim. It would be worse than useless for her to try to deny that she was Laura Figlan to escape a bigamy charge. At another time, she might have done it, but not now. They absolutely had her in the trap of her own making.

"I have but to locate Miss Figlan herself," Pauline began bravely.

"I suppose it hasn't struck you as odd," he sneered, "that Laura Figlan has calmly and kindly stayed away while you got volumes of press stuff on her name—stuff in which you are acclaimed her superior?"

He paused for effect. Pauline waited.

"If it hasn't," he went on, "it shows how little you know of my fair spouse. Well, the answer is simply that Laura Figlan is in Germany, and you will have plenty of time in which to serve a nice little prison term before she gets back to England or America. And even if she should get back sooner than is at all likely, do you think for a moment she would heroically come forward to save the woman who has usurped her place and done better in it than she did? Again I say you don't know the fair Laura."

Pauline felt like a bird looking into

the eyes of a snake, striving with all her might to resist its power, yet knowing that resistance is useless. She saw the entire cleverness of the plot they had concocted and woven about her. They had not overlooked a single detail.

"Well," said the man, "are you amenable to reason?"

"To what amount?" she asked.

"Ten thousand dallars," he replied.

"It's impossible. I haven't that much. You can send me to prison, but you can't make me pay out money I haven't got."

"You needn't lie," he said suspiciously. "You've made a bushel of money."

"I'm not lying," she replied with the weariness that one hears in the voice of a person who has received sentence from a physician. "My expenses are enormous."

"You spend too much on clothes," he grumbled, eying her exquisite gown and handsome white-fox stole. "Well, then, five thousand dollars and a hundred and fifty a week during your American engagement. I know you can afford that. My share——" he began, then stopped suddenly as if he had said too much.

A curious light came into Pauline's somber eyes.

"Four thousand and a hundred a week would be the best I could do," she replied hesitatingly.

"It's too little," he said. "I can't live on fif—on it, and you can get the other thousand from Gossman if you haven't got it."

"I can, but I won't," she replied, and the light in her eyes made him feel that he had driven her as far as she would go. "Besides," she went on, "I don't know that I'll do anything. What assurance have I that you and that woman

will leave me in peace even if I do what I can?"

"The assurance of the weekly envelope," he replied quickly.

"You may be eternally demanding an increase, hanging around me, humiliating me, annoying me in a thousand little ways." She spoke deliberately. "I'd gladly go to prison before I'd have Doris Clayton hanging around me—or you, either."

The man's face flushed in hot resentment. His colossal egotism could not tolerate such an attitude of mind on the part of any woman whatsoever toward himself. But he set his teeth and kept silent. He knew he must not go too far.

"I'll give you four thousand dollars and two tickets to Los Angeles, and send a hundred a week out there," said Pauline. "That is, if I find your claims true about Miss Figlan. But I won't pay you one cent to stay here and make my life unbearable! I'd rather choose peace in jail."

"Make it seventy-five each and we'll go," replied the man. "You know nobody can live decently on fifty."

"I said a hundred a week *to you*," said Pauline quickly. "If you are so sure of your ground, why have you elected to split with this woman?"

"She located me," he replied. "It's no more than fair that I split honestly with her."

"You're a very honest man." Pauline smiled sarcastically. "I believe this matter needs thinking over. I'll let you know my decision inside of a week. If you can't wait that long—well, you can put me in jail, and then I won't have to pay you anything."

She rose and hurried out. Frawley signaled to the waiter frantically, but by the time his bill was paid and he got out, Pauline had gone in the taxi he had ordered.

Personal Peculiarities

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes, even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

HOW many people stop to analyze the causes of their ailments—and incidentally of their unattractiveness? Ailments that are real enough in all conscience, as our sense of sight and smell can testify. Take, for example, some conditions that spring purely from personal habits of *uncleanliness*. How sadly these mar the health and attractiveness of the human race! One could write a volume upon this theme and then not have done it justice.

Recently there came to the attention of the writer two middle-aged sisters whose erratic habits had percolated outside of their immediate environment. The younger appeared quite ill—nothing definable, but she was peculiar, and her peculiarities were becoming more than apparent. Her physician had pronounced her incompetent and in need of a caretaker. The family were horrified, and consulted another medical adviser, who declared that there was absolutely nothing the matter with her. It was at first quite impossible to determine the chief source of her trouble. In time, however, the fact was elicited that, years before, a dentist had told her that a toothbrush did more harm than good, and since then she had not cleaned her teeth.

This "incompetent" sister objected also to a bathtub. She complained particularly of restlessness and growing

insomnia, and these "symptoms" naturally led her into "peculiar" habits. She prowled at night, startled the sleeping household by tickling their dormant olfactories with midnight bakings and brewings, and did other strange, out-of-the-ordinary things to kill time. The condition of her hair and skin was not attractive. After much persuasion, she was given a prolonged hot bath followed by an alcohol rub, and slept fourteen hours without a quiver.

One wonders how many persons study their habits. Let it be suggested that a record be kept for only one week of the hours at which meals are taken, of the quantity and quality of food and drink consumed each day, of the hours and character of sleep—the condition of the sleeping room as to neatness, order, and ventilation, and the condition of the bed, bedding, and night clothes must also be taken into consideration—of the various occupations and amusements of each twenty-four hours. Habits of dress should also be noted, as improper clothing has much to do with bronchial troubles. Badly regulated hours—as to work, sleep, and pleasures—have a direct relation to neurasthenic conditions; injudicious and irregular eating to gastro-intestinal troubles; the abuse of alcohol to nervous diseases and cirrhosis of the liver; and excessive indulgence in tobacco to

an irritable heart and impaired vision. Late hours and dissipation have their own endless train of disorders.

Neurotic persons form peculiar habits which they are liable to exaggerate and carry to extremes, as they do almost everything, and these habits oftentimes interfere seriously with their physical condition, far more so, indeed, than the underlying neurosis. *Secret habits* take a firm hold upon some individuals and undermine the health of both body and mind without visible cause. Tastes develop into habits that master the mind. Tea and coffee-drinking habits are the least of these, though sufficiently detrimental to health, but narcotics, hypnotics, and the like often break down the moral status of the individual and make him untruthful and unreliable.

Moral obliquity, by the way, has its beginnings in habits of untruthfulness formed in childhood. Some children are born with a remarkable sense of rectitude, but as a rule children are unable to distinguish between right and wrong and early form the habit of lying themselves out of a scrape in order to avoid punishment. The habit grows and forms a characteristic quality of the individual in adult years. These moral habits undermine the mental attitude, so that the outlook on life is oblique.

Habits of uncleanness grow with years and are, of course, the most disgusting of all, because they effect others even more than those addicted to them. In this respect, elderly people are most at fault, not from laziness, but from a growing disinclination to exert themselves. This is one of the surest indications of physical decay, and one against which the elderly should struggle; otherwise, it will surely overcome them. In a future article, *the hygiene of the aged* will be thoroughly discussed.

Peculiar gustatory tastes lead to many ailments and blemishes of the

skin and mucous membranes. Many persons cannot ingest certain articles of diet without experiencing an attack of *hives*; nevertheless, they persist in eating these articles. Others develop a fondness for combinations of foods that set up gastric disturbance, affecting the vaso-motor nerves. Now hives—nettle rash or urticaria—as this condition is also termed—is common enough, and in its simple form is not particularly unsightly, though highly unpleasant. There is, however, a form of *giant hives* or urticaria, the cause of which is the same, although not generally understood.

In nettle rash or hives, there is a good deal of burning and itching of the wheals, as every one knows who has experienced this condition. In giant hives, there are localized swellings of the skin, the most usual places being the face, lips, and tongue. The hands, too, are very often affected, as well as other parts of the body. The swellings are tense, though puffy; they do not pit on pressure. They last from a few hours to a few days and disappear as suddenly as they come, or they may disappear in one part of the body and appear on another, or in several places at the same time. The swellings vary greatly in degree and sometimes gain great size; hence the name "giant urticaria."

A correspondent recently complained, "My face swells up every once in a while and gets so puffy I look a sight." Others have given really remarkable descriptions of this peculiar condition, fearing that they were developing Bright's disease and doubting the accuracy of urinalyses that had been negative.

The diagnosis of giant urticaria should present no difficulties if one is on guard. Puffiness of the face as well as of the limbs would naturally lead to at least a suspicion of kidney complications, but, as said before, the swellings

do not *pit on pressure*; furthermore, the affection is in all probability neurotic in character and is confined to persons of a nervous temperament in whom the vaso-motor nerves are in a state of unstable equilibrium.

In giant urticaria, the skin shows peculiar qualities on being scratched or written upon with a dull point. If the skin is inadvertently scratched, urticarial stripes or wheals usually appear, and this condition may be purposely brought about by irritating the surface. If a number or some letters are traced upon the skin, they show up with vivid distinctness a few moments later and can be plainly read hours after, as they fade away very slowly.

Now this condition of external swellings may occur internally, and precisely the same thing happen upon the mucous membranes as takes place upon the skin. The tongue, larynx, pharynx, stomach, and intestines may be affected, so that great local discomfort, even danger to life, may result. Difficulty in breathing and in swallowing is felt; intestinal and gastric colic are induced; while several cases have perished from swellings of the throat which completely occluded the larynx. As in urticaria proper, the stomach is frequently the seat of a good deal of trouble, colic, nausea, and vomiting being very common associates and dominating the picture to such an extent that many cases are mistaken for *food poisoning*.

It is well known that in some persons certain articles of food give rise to violent gastro-intestinal symptoms, in the course of which there are skin eruptions. Others always experience an urticarial outbreak upon the ingestions of certain crustaceans or berries and so on. There are cases of this trouble in which the joints swell. These attacks may come on at various intervals, of days, weeks, or months, or with regularity, the former state of health being regained between the attacks.

Sometimes a blow brings on a swelling that shows a tendency to recur at the same spot again and again. There are persons marked at birth, the swellings remaining practically permanent without any impairment of health or associate symptoms. Except for the discomfort and, when internal, the pain attendant upon the œdema, there is no danger unless the larynx becomes involved.

Persons who show this tendency should eliminate such foods and actions as are likely to prove irritating to their vaso-motor nerves.

Peculiarities regarding the eyes and their settings are perhaps more marked, when they exist, than any others, doubtless because of the great prominence of these features. The following amusing reference to this sort of thing was made by a dramatic critic in a smart magazine recently: "Walter Hampton, as the millionaire hero, does the major part of his acting with his eyebrows." This unfortunate actor may be possessed of a nervous "tic"—a peculiarity that will be taken up later—while many acquire habits of the eye that are gradually brought about by systemic affections of one kind or another, especially by nervous troubles.

The bulging, staring eye is not a normal eye. Although the habit of staring is acquired, and is distressingly displeasing, it may also spring from a condition called *exophthalmic goitre*.

Squinting can be corrected in childhood with proper lenses; later on in life, an operation may be necessary. Forcible closure of the eyelids until they resemble a narrow slit is a practice indulged in by many who think to reinforce their conversation in this manner, to give their words greater emphasis. Persons with weak, tired eyes are also prone to this, to aid their sight.

It must be remembered that, while the eye is an organ of sight, with its own special function, it is also a part of the

general system and is powerfully influenced by the *status of the whole body*; it is disturbed by the disturbances of other structures, and shows in marked degree affections of other organs which interfere with its functions. This is probably the case in Bright's disease, which is often first diagnosed by the eye specialist to whom the patient has gone for an affection of the eye.

Now the eye is a prolongation of the brain—in other words, “the brain comes out to see;” therefore, in all pathological conditions of the brain and spinal cord, the eye shows manifestations of such disturbances.

To a lesser degree, the eye also shares in the functional nervous troubles that play so prominent a part in the health of all civilized beings to-day. The nervous system is overworked most of the time, and the eyes all of the time, by those engaged in work necessitating their continual use during working hours. The organs of sight are then directly overtaxed and worn out, while the general nervous system is likewise being taxed, so that the strain is twofold. Now many persons refuse to wear glasses or spectacles because of their aging effect. Women of leisure who use the eyes for near work only in the privacy of their inner sanctuaries, are the only ones who can afford to indulge themselves in this vanity. The eyes of the working classes are too precious a possession to maltreat. When well cared for, they are warranted to last a lifetime, the use of lenses being a reinforcement to defects in vision whereby the eye is made whole, as it were.

Glasses that correct defects in vision make the eyes normal, while tired eyes are relieved by rest glasses.

The needs of working people in this respect, and the wisdom of consulting qualified medical specialists in eye work, cannot be dwelt upon too forcibly. The eye is the most muscular organ in the

body. Now if there is a lack of equilibrium—balance—in the action of the muscles of the two eyes, so that fixation of the eyes is maintained only through an excessive amount of nerve force in helping the weak muscle or set of muscles, there follows a train of symptoms which is usually included under the term *muscular asthenopia*. There is more or less constant dull headache—which may be general or localized in the front or back of the head—blurred vision, inability to use the eyes at near work, an aversion to work, an aversion to light; sometimes there may be vertigo and nausea, confusion of ideas, sleeplessness, and a feeling of physical exhaustion while in a moving crowd, in attendance at the theater or church, or after riding in cars.

Relief in many cases has undoubtedly followed the correction of the defects of muscle strain. Now this condition is often caused by errors of refraction that are unscientifically corrected. Gradual failure of vision is brought about by many oncoming conditions, and failure to consult an oculist is indescribably foolish, while failure to give the eyes the benefit of glasses for near work and for reading, and to use *rest glasses* when indicated, is nothing short of a form of near-sightedness, which, when due to ignorance is forgivable, but when due to vanity—Well, the punishment fits the crime.

Odd tricks and facial grimaces mar the appearance of many who are otherwise attractive. Notable among these unpleasant peculiarities is the so-called “*tic*” or *habit spasm*. This form of tic is a spasm which is identical with movements of volitional intent, and so contains a psychic element that may be subconscious. Thus one may have a trifling peculiarity of gesture, of facial expression, and so on, which, under the weakness induced by sickness, becomes more pronounced.

In *facial “tics,”* the eye winks exactly

like one that excludes a flying particle of dirt. The effort at swallowing is observed in many nervous persons who carry this habit to a distressing length, as do others who indulge in sucking or smacking of the lips, grunting sounds, a hissing noise accompanying an intake of the breath, and other noises, sometimes of an indecent character, of which the "tiquer" seems utterly oblivious. They are, however, under his will, because on occasion they can be completely repressed, while subsiding entirely during sleep.

The continual use of the muscles of deglutition affects the neighboring muscles, so that the neck is frequently held rigidly, or a slight wry neck may develop. Again, the lines of the mouth may become "fixed" from habits of smacking the lips and so on. A little boy of eleven who, during the past summer, developed a distressing facial tic, on convalescing from influenza has contracted the habit in so exaggerated a form that nerve stretching may have to be resorted to.

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

Statement of the Ownership, Management, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of SMITH'S MAGAZINE, published monthly, at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1919:

State of New York, County of New York, (ss.)
Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared George C. Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is Treasurer of Street & Smith Corporation, publishers of SMITH'S MAGAZINE, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: *Publishers*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *editor*, Charles A. MacLean, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *managing editors*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *business managers*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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Personal peculiarities are nothing more than habits that grow upon one unawares and, unless checked, mar the beauty, health, and often the happiness of those so afflicted.

GEORGE C. SMITH, Treasurer,
of Street & Smith Corporation, publishers.
Sworn to and subscribed before me this 20th day of March, 1919, Charles V. Ostertag, Notary Public, No. 49, New York County. (My commission expires March 30, 1921.)

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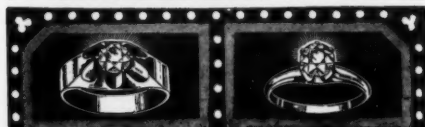
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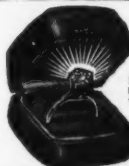
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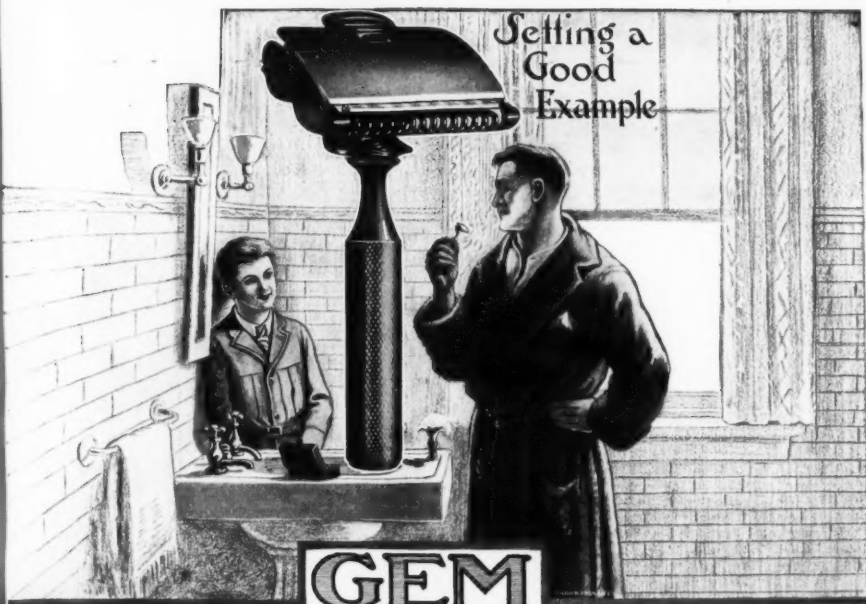
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